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THE POEMS OF EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

Edmund Clarence Stedman

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1908

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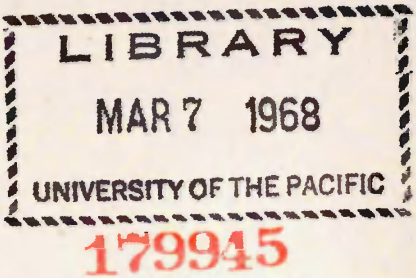

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

In the present volume are collected the poems formerly contained in the Household Edition of "Stedman's Poetical Works" and in "Poems Now First Collected," together with a number of pieces written since the publication of the last-named series. Shortly before his death Mr. Stedman gave directions for the preparation of a new volume, to contain all the poems which he deemed worthy of preservation, rearranged according to subjects, rather than, as is usual in collections of the kind, in the order of their original publication. The editors, in accordance with these instructions, have grouped the various poems, related either by subject or by the occasion which produced them, in eleven sections. Thirteen poems published in previous editions, most of them juvenilia, have been omitted entirely, and three others have been largely pruned. All the pieces published in "Poems Now First Collected" have been preserved, and seventeen, written since that volume was issued, have been included in this definitive edition. Among the latter are "Mater Coronata," the "Hymn of the West," "H. van D.," "To Dr. Waldstein on His Proposal to Excavate Herculaneum," and "John Hay." Translations of the thirteenth and a part of the tenth idyls of Theocritus have been added, not only because of their beauty and the faithfulness of the rendering from the Greek, but as examples of a work which Mr. Stedman had in mind to do and had in part accomplished — a metrical version of the Sicilian Poets, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus. He was prevented by his other occupations from completing the work, and the two fragments here given are the only ones which he left in shape for publication.

October 5, 1908.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edmund Clarence Stedman was the elder of the two sons of Edmund Burke Stedman and Elizabeth Clementine Dodge Stedman. He was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on the 8th day of October, 1833. Of his father, who was a major in the militia and a prosperous lumber merchant, there are few traditions extant, as he died in his thirty-fifth year, after less than five years of married life. He was of good New England stock, and, as his letters show, a devoted husband and father, and an ardent Christian, typical of an era when the religious life was more frankly the topic of talk and letters than it is to-day. Of his mother we know more. Elizabeth Dodge Stedman was a woman whose beauty, magnetism, and vital charm have enriched the traditions of her day. A poet and writer of great promise, if not of great fulfilment, vibrantly sensitive to every form of artistic expression, a temperamental exaltée of the first rank, she was permitted to bequeath to her son that combination of qualities, undefined but unmistakable, which the world has agreed to call by the name of genius. In some yet unpublished memoirs, greatly prized in the family annals, she gives a charming picture of the dawning of the poetic impulse in the baby Edmund: "He was a remarkably precocious child from birth, and a very strange one. As soon as he could speak he lisped in rhyme, and as soon as he could write, which was at the age of six years, he gave shape and measure to his dreams. He was a sedate and solemn baby, indeed he hardly ever even smiled in babyhood and seldom

cried. When he was between five and six years, on being put to bed he would get on his knees, bury his head in the pillow, and if told to lie down and go to sleep, would answer, 'Let me alone, please, the poetry is coming.'"

When her son Edmund was six years old Mrs. Stedman married again, her second husband being the Hon. William Burnett Kinney, owner of the Newark "Daily Advertiser," who was shortly after appointed Minister to Sardinia. His wife accompanied him on his mission, leaving her two little sons, Edmund and Charles, in the care of their uncle, James Stedman, of Norwich, Connecticut. Here for fourteen years, and until his emancipation at the age of twenty, the battle was fought and re-fought between the just, but exacting and hot-tempered, guardian, a typical New England Puritan of the last century, and the high-spirited untamable lad, with his sore perception of an alien environment and his defiant struggles for ampler breathing space. Perhaps some such beginning as this was inevitable, and it is idle to speculate what different results a different *milieu* might have meant for the strong-willed boy. It may be noted in passing that he himself never alluded to those days without a flash of that spirit which renewed his youth to the last: "I was always a come-outer," he would say; "they could n't do anything with me when I was a youngster, and it was n't all beer and skittles for them either!" Perhaps pity for the trials of embryo genius need not forbid a pang for those harsh elders of a sterner day than ours, for whom truly it was *not* "all beer and skittles."

One good may be definitely claimed as a result of James Stedman's rule. The knowledge and love of the classics, both ancient and modern, which his nephew carried through life, was a direct result of his fostering care. This debt was recognized long ago by the late Augustus Rodney Mac-

donough, in an article appearing in the old "Scribner's." "Stedman's English," he said, "proves, by the purity of its selection and the neatness and conciseness of its turn, that if the literature of his mother tongue made any part of his training, — and it probably did, under the direction of his uncle, who was a scholar and a jurist, — he was guided to the fountain, and not to the manufacturer's rills." His first long poem, "Purgatorio," written for the Kappa Sigma Theta of his college when he was sixteen years of age, although rightfully to be dismissed under the head of "Juvenilia," is a rapid fire of classical allusion mixed with the coterie-sprach of the college, curiously mature in its immaturity, and already showing that security of beat and rhythm that was never to fail him. In the following year he took the first prize in a Yale literary competition, with a poem in twenty-nine stanzas entitled "Westminster Abbey."

At the age of fifteen Edmund Clarence Stedman entered Yale College. He was suspended at the end of his Sophomore year for a prank that has been too often the subject of dark allusion, yet one so forgivable compared with many forms of youthful outbreak, that after all these years it calls for no veil of silence. He ran away with a travelling theatrical company, taking, it is said, a part in their performances. As a result of this escapade his college was closed to him, though his love for her never weakened, and twenty years later she was proud to restore her brilliant scapegoat to his class membership and give him his degree of Master of Arts.

After a period of private study under a tutor in Northampton, he returned to Norwich and founded the Norwich "Tribune," and in 1853, when twenty years old, he married Laura Hyde Woodworth, a beautiful girl of the same age, with whom he lived for more than fifty years and by

whom he had two sons, one of whom survived him, and a daughter who died in infancy. With this act Stedman took his fate into his own hands; although only a boy in years, he had given hostages to fortune, and it was not in him to cry for quarter. In 1854 he sold out his interest in the "Tribune" and bought the Winsted "Herald." Of this venture Macdonough says, "The spirit and ingenuity with which Stedman conducted his journal and the novelty of the correct literary tone which he took pains to impart to it, earned him a high reputation through the State." In 1855 he sold out again and moved to New York, where he soon became a member of the "Tribune" staff, besides contributing to the magazines of the day. When the war broke out he went to the front for two years as special correspondent for the "World." He then became private secretary to Attorney-General Bates of Lincoln's Cabinet, combining the duties of this post with the study of law. This proved to be the end of his career as a journalist. At the age of thirty he went into Wall Street, and six years later became a member of the New York Stock Exchange. This he did with the avowed purpose of making it a stepping-stone to the literary life. To quote his own words, "There was no such market for literary wares at that day as has since arisen, and I needed to be independent in order to write and study."

This deliberate choice by Mr. Stedman of a twofold career, so divided in its interests and apparently so antagonistic in its claims as that of poet and banker, has given rise to some critical comment from a portion of his audience, who have chosen to see in it a species of spiritual retreat. To this it may be urged that Mr. Stedman was essentially a man of affairs as well as poet; he was endowed with unusual executive powers, and in becoming a financier he undoubt-

edly gave scope to a genuine side of his nature. Furthermore, it must be remembered that he "made good," and while still in his early prime had reached his goal — the freedom of a modest competence — and was ready to devote the remainder of his days to literary work. This plan was frustrated by no fault of his own. A tragedy of errors on the part of one in whom he had put his trust undid the work of years and sent him back to an unravelled task, — sent him back with unbroken courage, it is true, but with lessened strength and added responsibilities. If character is to be gauged by the greater tests, then Edmund Clarence Stedman stands high indeed among his fellows for the fine spirit with which, at this supreme juncture, he accepted failure and rejected defeat.

Very soon after his arrival in New York the young writer began to attract the attention of the reading public and to make friends in the literary Bohemia of that day. His life-long friendships with Bayard Taylor, Stoddard, Curtis, Aldrich, Howells, Winter, and others of the guild, date from this time. Three poems published in the "Tribune" — "The Diamond Wedding," "The Ballad of Lager Bier," and "How Old Brown took Harper's Ferry" — captured the popular fancy with their young gusto, and his first volume, "Poems, Lyric and Idyllic," was published in 1860.

Howells, in his "Literary Friends and Acquaintances," gives a sketch of Stedman in these days: "I had already met, in my first sojourn in the capital, a young journalist who had given hostages to poetry, and whom I was very glad to see and proud to know. . . . I sat by his bed while our souls launched together into the joyful realms of hope and praise. In him I found the quality of Boston, the honor and passion of literature, and not a mere pose of the literary life; and the world knows without my telling how true he

has been to his ideal of it. Afterwards when I saw him afoot, I found him of a worldly splendor in dress and envied him, as much as I could envy him anything, the New York tailor whose art had clothed him. I had a New York tailor, too, but with a difference. He had a worldly dash along with his supermundane gifts, which took me almost as much, and all the more because I could see that he valued himself nothing for it. He was all for literature and for literary men as the superior of every one."

Stedman's first book was followed in 1864 by "Alice of Monmouth, an Idyl of the Great War, and other Poems," and in 1869 by "The Blameless Prince, and other Poems." A bare enumeration of his literary output from this time until a few years before his death makes the fact of his divided energy seem almost incredible.

The "Complete Poetical Works" appeared in 1875; "Hawthorne, and other Poems, in 1877; "Lyrics and Idyls, with other Poems," 1879; "Poems Now First Collected," 1894; "Mater Coronata," 1900.

His principal critical works were "Victorian Poets," published in 1875; "Poets of America," 1885; "The Nature and Elements of Poetry" (first delivered at Johns Hopkins University as the inaugural course of lectures for the Turnbull Chair of Poetry, and repeated at Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania), 1892.

He edited (in association with T. B. Aldrich) "Cameos from the Poems of Walter Savage Landor"; the "Poems of Austin Dobson"; a "Library of American Literature" in eleven volumes (with Ellen M. Hutchinson), 1888–89; "The Works of Edgar Allan Poe" in ten volumes (with Professor G. E. Woodberry), 1895; "A Victorian Anthology," 1895; "An American Anthology," 1900.

In 1891 Mr. Stedman succeeded Mr. Lowell as president

of the American Copyright League. He also served as president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1904 and 1905.

In 1900, after thirty-one years of occupancy, Mr. Stedman gave up his seat on the Stock Exchange. He had already sold his town house and bought another home, named for his wife, the "Casa Laura," in Lawrence Park, Bronxville, a suburb of New York. Increasing years and failing health forbade the daily journey to and fro, and half impatiently, half humorously, he conceded that it was "time to be old and to take in sail." In the years that followed, though the zest of life never forsook him, the hand of destiny weighed heavy upon him. Friend after friend passed away, and each passing shook him sorely, for his loyalties were passions. He lost his wife in the summer of 1905; his eldest son died suddenly six months later. John Hay, Richard Henry Stoddard, T. B. Aldrich, all lifelong friends, were taken in swift succession. Henry Harland and William Sharp, best beloved of his juniors, fell in their prime. His superb vitality waned visibly, though he daily urged himself to the limit of his failing strength, and, well or ill, in work or in leisure, to one claim upon him he offered no resistance, — to the repeated call for guidance and advice from those who would write. The young writer, and especially the young poet, found in him a tireless friend. Erring perhaps, if he erred, in over-optimism, the very fact that youth would be at verse-making endeared it to him; and those who loved him best, loved best of all the cordial gravity with which he took every manuscript thrust at him and set himself to see what could be done about it. The tale of all he did about it will be fully told only in the literary output of the years ahead of us, for he never missed a sign of promise, and fundamentally, for all his leniency, he made no mistakes.

Soon after the death of his wife Mr. Stedman moved back to New York. He took an apartment up-town and settled himself for the last time with his beloved books around him. Here, in spite of loss, ill health, and increasing age, he enjoyed life as only life's inveterate lovers may, and at the end the gods were kind. There came three or four days and nights of unusual well-being and high spirits. The evening before he died some of his near relatives dined with him and his infectious boyish gayety was the life of the occasion. The next day, after a morning devoted as usual to literary work, he called up an old friend over the telephone and demanded that he dine with him, on the plea that his dinner was to be an unusually good one that night. The invitation was accepted, and he made gleeful preparation for an evening of the reminiscent talk that was his favorite form of entertainment. In the middle of the afternoon he fell without a word. "Give me to die unwitting of the day," he had sung: his prayer was granted, and for him who had fenced with death so long and with such gay courage the end came with one swift stroke.

LINDA STEDMAN.

IN WAR TIME

HOW OLD BROWN TOOK HARPER'S FERRY

John Brown in Kansas settled, like a steadfast Yankee farmer,
Brave and godly, with four sons, all stalwart men of might.
There he spoke aloud for freedom, and the Border-strife grew warmer,
Till the Rangers fired his dwelling, in his absence, in the night;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Came homeward in the morning — to find his house burned down.

Then he grasped his trusty rifle and boldly fought for freedom;
Smote from border unto border the fierce, invading band;
And he and his brave boys vowed — so might Heaven help and speed 'em! —
They would save those grand old prairies from the curse that blights the land;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Said, "Boys, the Lord will aid us!" and he shoved his ramrod down.

And the Lord *did* aid these men, and they labored day and even,
Saving Kansas from its peril; and their very lives seemed charmed,

Till the ruffians killed one son, in the blessed light of Heaven, —
In cold blood the fellows slew him, as he journeyed all unarmed;
Then Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Shed not a tear, but shut his teeth, and frowned a terrible frown!

Then they seized another brave boy, — not amid the heat of battle,
But in peace, behind his ploughshare, — and they loaded him with chains,
And with pikes, before their horses, even as they goad their cattle,
Drove him cruelly, for their sport, and at last blew out his brains;
Then Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Raised his right hand up to Heaven, calling Heaven's vengeance down.

And he swore a fearful oath, by the name of the Almighty,
He would hunt this ravening evil that had scathed and torn him so;
He would seize it by the vitals; he would crush it day and night; he
Would so pursue its footsteps, so return it blow for blow,
That Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Should be a name to swear by, in backwoods or in town!

Then his beard became more grizzled, and his wild blue eye grew wilder,
And more sharply curved his hawk's-nose, snuffing battle from afar;

And he and the two boys left, though the Kansas strife
waxed milder,
Grew more sullen, till was over the bloody Border War,
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Had gone crazy, as they reckoned by his fearful glare and
frown.

So he left the plains of Kansas and their bitter woes behind
him,
Slipt off into Virginia, where the statesmen all are
born,
Hired a farm by Harper's Ferry, and no one knew where
to find him,
Or whether he'd turned parson, or was jacketed and
shorn;
For Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Mad as he was, knew texts enough to wear a parson's
gown.

He bought no ploughs and harrows, spades and shovels,
and such trifles;
But quietly to his rancho there came, by every train,
Boxes full of pikes and pistols, and his well-beloved Sharps
rifles;
And eighteen other madmen joined their leader there
again.
Says Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
"Boys, we've got an army large enough to march and take
the town!

"Take the town, and seize the muskets, free the negroes
and then arm them;
Carry the County and the State, ay, and all the potent
South.

On their own heads be the slaughter, if their victims rise
to harm them —
These Virginians! who believed not, nor would heed
the warning mouth."
Says Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
" The world shall see a Republic, or my name is not John
Brown."

'T was the sixteenth of October, on the evening of a Sun-
day:
" This good work," declared the captain, " shall be on a
holy night!"
It was on a Sunday evening, and before the noon of Mon-
day,
With two sons, and Captain Stephens, fifteen privates—
black and white,
Captain Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Marched across the bridged Potomac, and knocked the
sentry down;

Took the guarded armory-building, and the muskets and
the cannon;
Captured all the county majors and the colonels, one by
one;
Scared to death each gallant scion of Virginia they ran on,
And before the noon of Monday, I say, the deed was
done.
Mad Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
With his eighteen other crazy men, went in and took the
town.

Very little noise and bluster, little smell of powder made he;
It was all done in the midnight, like the Emperor's *coup
d'état*.

"Cut the wires! Stop the rail-cars! Hold the streets and bridges!" said he,
Then declared the new Republic, with himself for guiding star,—
This Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown;
And the bold two thousand citizens ran off and left the town.

Then was riding and railroading and expressing here and thither;
And the Martinsburg Sharpshooters and the Charlestown Volunteers,
And the Shepherdstown and Winchester Militia hastened whither
Old Brown was said to muster his ten thousand grenadiers.
General Brown!
Osawatomie Brown!!
Behind whose rampant banner all the North was pouring down.

But at last, 't is said, some prisoners escaped from Old Brown's durance,
And the effervescent valor of the Chivalry broke out,
When they learned that nineteen madmen had the marvellous assurance—
Only nineteen—thus to seize the place and drive them straight about;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Found an army come to take him, encamped around the town.

But to storm, with all the forces I have mentioned, was too risky;
So they hurried off to Richmond for the Government Marines,

Tore them from their weeping matrons, fired their souls with Bourbon whiskey,
Till they battered down Brown's castle with their ladders and machines;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Received three bayonet stabs, and a cut on his brave old crown.

Tallyho! the old Virginia gentry gather to the baying!
In they rushed and killed the game, shooting lustily away;
And whene'er they slew a rebel, those who came too late for slaying,
Not to lose a share of glory, fired their bullets in his clay;
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Saw his sons fall dead beside him, and between them laid him down.

How the conquerors wore their laurels; how they hastened on the trial;
How Old Brown was placed, half dying, on the Charlestown court-house floor;
How he spoke his grand oration, in the scorn of all denial;
What the brave old madman told them,—these are known the country o'er.
"Hang Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,"
Said the judge, "and all such rebels!" with his most judicial frown.

But, Virginians, don't do it! for I tell you that the flagon,
Filled with blood of Old Brown's offspring, was first poured by Southern hands;
And each drop from Old Brown's life-veins, like the red gore of the dragon,

May spring up a vengeful Fury, hissing through your slave-worn lands!
And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
May trouble you more than ever, when you 've nailed his coffin down!

November, 1859.

SUMTER

April 12, 1861

Came the morning of that day
When the God to whom we pray
Gave the soul of Henry Clay
To the land;
How we loved him, living, dying!
But his birthday banners flying
Saw us asking and replying
Hand to hand.

For we knew that far away,
Round the fort in Charleston Bay,
Hung the dark impending fray,
Soon to fall;
And that Sumter's brave defender
Had the summons to surrender
Seventy loyal hearts and tender, —
(Those were all!)

And we knew the April sun
Lit the length of many a gun, —
Hosts of batteries to the one
Island crag:
Guns and mortars grimly frowning,
Johnson, Moultrie, Pinckney, crowning,

And ten thousand men disowning
The old flag.

O, the fury of the fight
Even then was at its height!
Yet no breath, from noon till night,
Reached us here;
We had almost ceased to wonder,
And the day had faded under,
When the echo of the thunder
Filled each ear!

Then our hearts more fiercely beat,
As we crowded on the street,
Hot to gather and repeat
All the tale;
All the doubtful chances turning,
Till our souls with shame were burning,
As if twice our bitter yearning
Could avail!

Who had fired the earliest gun?
Was the fort by traitors won?
Was there succor? What was done
Who could know?
And once more our thoughts would wander
To the gallant, lone commander,
On his battered ramparts grander
Than the foe.

Not too long the brave shall wait:
On their own heads be their fate,
Who against the hallowed State
Dare begin;
Flag defied and compact riven!
In the record of high Heaven
How shall Southern men be shriven
For the sin?

KEARNY AT SEVEN PINES

So that soldierly legend is still on its journey, —
That story of Kearny who knew not to yield!
'T was the day when with Jameson, fierce Berry, and Birney,
Against twenty thousand he rallied the field.
Where the red volleys poured, where the clamor rose highest,
Where the dead lay in clumps through the dwarf oak and pine,
Where the aim from the thicket was surest and nighest, —
No charge like Phil Kearny's along the whole line.

When the battle went ill, and the bravest were solemn,
Near the dark Seven Pines, where we still held our ground,
He rode down the length of the withering column,
And his heart at our war-cry leapt up with a bound;
He snuffed, like his charger, the wind of the powder, —
His sword waved us on and we answered the sign:
Loud our cheer as we rushed, but his laugh rang the louder,
"There 's the devil's own fun, boys, along the whole line!"

How he strode his brown steed! How we saw his blade brighten
In the one hand still left, — and the reins in his teeth!
He laughed like a boy when the holidays heighten,
But a soldier's glance shot from his visor beneath.
Up came the reserves to the mellay infernal,
Asking where to go in, — through the clearing or pine?
"O, anywhere! Forward! 'T is all the same, Colonel:
You 'll find lovely fighting along the whole line!"

O, evil the black shroud of night at Chantilly,
That hid him from sight of his brave men and tried!

IN WAR TIME

Foul, foul sped the bullet that clipped the white lily,
The flower of our knighthood, the whole army's pride!
Yet we dream that he still, — in that shadowy region
Where the dead form their ranks at the wan drummer's sign, —
Rides on, as of old, down the length of his legion,
And the word still is Forward! along the whole line.

WANTED — A MAN

BACK from the trebly crimsoned field
Terrible words are thunder-tost;
Full of the wrath that will not yield,
Full of revenge for battles lost!
Hark to their echo, as it crost
The Capital, making faces wan:
"End this murderous holocaust;
Abraham Lincoln, give us a MAN!

"Give us a man of God's own mould,
Born to marshal his fellow-men;
One whose fame is not bought and sold
At the stroke of a politician's pen;
Give us the man of thousands ten,
Fit to do as well as to plan;
Give us a rallying-cry, and then,
Abraham Lincoln, give us a MAN!

"No leader to shirk the boasting foe,
And to march and countermarch our brave,
Till they fall like ghosts in the marshes low,
And swamp-grass covers each nameless grave;
Nor another, whose fatal banners wave
Aye in Disaster's shameful van;
Nor another, to bluster, and lie, and rave; —
Abraham Lincoln, give us a MAN!

TREASON'S LAST DEVICE

"Hearts are mourning in the North,
While the sister rivers seek the main,
Red with our life-blood flowing forth, —
Who shall gather it up again?
Though we march to the battle-plain
Firmly as when the strife began,
Shall all our offering be in vain? —
Abraham Lincoln, give us a MAN!

"Is there never one in all the land,
One on whose might the Cause may lean?
Are all the common ones so grand,
And all the titled ones so mean?
What if your failure may have been
In trying to make good bread from bran,
From worthless metal a weapon keen? —
Abraham Lincoln, find us a MAN!

"O, we will follow him to the death,
Where the foeman's fiercest columns are!
O, we will use our latest breath,
Cheering for every sacred star!
His to marshal us high and far;
Ours to battle, as patriots can
When a Hero leads the Holy War! —
Abraham Lincoln, give us a MAN!"

September 8, 1862.

TREASON'S LAST DEVICE

SONS of New England, in the fray,
Do you hear the clamor behind your back?
Do you hear the yelping of Blanche, and Tray,
Sweetheart, and all the mongrel pack?
Girded well with her ocean crags,
Little our mother heeds their noise;

Her eyes are fixed on crimsoned flags:
  But you — do you hear it, Yankee boys?

Do you hear them say that the patriot fire
  Burns on her altars too pure and bright,
To the darkened heavens leaping higher,
  Though drenched with the blood of every fight;
That in the light of its searching flame
  Treason and tyrants stand revealed,
And the yielding craven is put to shame,
  On Capitol floor or foughten field?

Do you hear the hissing voice, which saith
  That she — who bore through all the land
The lyre of Freedom, the torch of Faith,
  And young Invention's mystic wand —
Should gather her skirts and dwell apart,
  With not one of her sisters to share her fate, —
A Hagar, wandering sick at heart;
  A pariah, bearing the Nation's hate?

Sons, who have peopled the distant West,
  And planted the Pilgrim vine anew,
Where, by a richer soil carest,
  It grows as ever its parent grew,
Say, do you hear, — while the very bells
  Of your churches ring with her ancient voice,
And the song of your children sweetly tells
  How true was the land of your fathers' choice, —

Do you hear the traitors who bid you speak
  The word that shall sever the sacred tie?
And ye, who dwell by the golden Peak,
  Has the subtle whisper glided by?
Has it crost the immemorial plains,
  To coasts where the gray Pacific roars

And the Pilgrim blood in the people's veins
  Is pure as the wealth of their mountain ores?

Spirits of sons who, side by side,
  In a hundred battles fought and fell,
Whom now no East and West divide,
  In the isles where the shades of heroes dwell;
Say, has it reached your glorious rest,
  And ruffled the calm which crowns you there, —
The shame that recreants have confest,
  The plot that floats in the troubled air?

Sons of New England, here and there,
  Wherever men are still holding by
The honor our fathers left so fair!
  Say, do you hear the cowards' cry?
Crouching among her grand old crags,
  Lightly our mother heeds their noise,
With her fond eyes fixed on distant flags;
  But you — do you hear it, Yankee boys?

WASHINGTON, January 19, 1863.

ALICE OF MONMOUTH

I

1

HENDRICK VAN GHELT of Monmouth shore,
His fame still rings the county o'er!
The stock that he raised, the stallion he rode,
The fertile acres his farmers sowed;
The dinners he gave; the yacht which lay
At his fishing-dock in the Lower Bay;
The suits he waged, through many a year,
For a rood of land behind his pier, —

Of these the chronicles yet remain
From Navesink Heights to Freehold Plain.

2

The Shrewsbury people in autumn help
Their sandy toplands with marl and kelp,
And their peach and apple orchards fill
The gurgling vats of the cross-road mill.
They tell, as each twirls his tavern-can,
Wonderful tales of that stanch old man,
And they boast, of the draught they have tasted and smelt,
"'T is good as the still of Hendrick Van Ghelt!"

3

Were he alive, and at his prime,
In this, our boisterous modern time,
He would surely be, as he could not then,
A stalwart leader of mounted men, —
A ranger, shouting his battle-cry,
Who knew how to fight and dared to die;
And the fame which a county's limit spanned
Might have grown a legend throughout the land.

4

He would have scoured the Valley through,
Doing as now our bravest do;
Would have tried rough-riding on the border,
Punishing raider and marauder;
With bearded Ashby crossing swords
As he took the Shenandoah fords;
Giving bold Stuart a bloody chase
Ere he reached again his trysting-place.
Horse and horseman of the foe
The blast of his bugle-charge should know,
And his men should water their steeds, at will,
From the banks of Southern river and rill.

5

How many are there of us, in this
Discordant social wilderness,
Whose thriftiest scions the power gain,
Through meet conditions of sun and rain,
To yield, on the fairest blossoming shoot,
A mellow harvest of perfect fruit?
Fashioned after so rare a type,
How should his life grow full and ripe,
There, in the passionless haunts of Peace,
Through trade, and tillage, and wealth's increase?

6

But at his manor-house he dwelt,
And royally bore the name Van Ghelt;
Nor found a larger part to play
Than such as a county magnate may:
Ruling the hustings as he would,
Lord of the rustic neighborhood;
With potent wishes and quiet words
Holding an undisputed sway.
The broadest meadows, the fattest herds,
The fleetest roadsters, the warmest cheer,—
These were old Hendrick's many a year.
Daughters unto his hearthstone came,
And a son — to keep the ancient name.

7

Often, perchance, the old man's eye
From a seaward casement would espy,
Scanning the harborage in the bay,
A ship which idly at anchor lay;
Watching her as she rose and fell,
Up and down, with the evening swell,
Her cordage slackened, her sails unbent,
And all her proud life somnolent.

And perchance he thought — "My life, it seems,
Like her, unfreighted with aught but dreams;
Yet I feel within me a strength to dare
Some outward voyage, I know not where!"
But the forceful impulse wore away
In the common life of every day,
And for Hendrick Van Ghelt no timely hour
Ruffled the calm of that hidden power;
Yet in the prelude of my song
His storied presence may well belong,
As a Lombardy poplar, lithe and hoar,
Stands at a Monmouth farmer's door,
Set like a spire against the sky,
Marking the hours, while lover and maid
Linger long in its stately shade,
And round its summit the swallows fly.

II

I

NATURE a devious by-way finds: solve me her secret whim,
That the seed of a gnarled oak should sprout to a sapling straight and prim;
That a russet should grow on the pippin stock, on the garden-rose a brier;
That a stalwart race, in old Hendrick's son, should smother its wonted fire.

Hermann, fond of his book, and shirking the brawny out-door sports;
Sent to college, and choosing for life the law with her mouldy courts;
Proud, and of tender honor, as well became his father's blood,
But with cold and courtly self-restraint weighing the ill and good;

Wed to a lady whose delicate veins that molten azure held,
Ichor of equal birth, wherewith our gentry their couplings weld;
Viewing his father's careless modes with half a tolerant eye,
As one who honors, regretting not, old fashions passing by.

After a while the moment came when, unto the son and heir,
A son and heir was given in turn,— a moment of joy and prayer;
For the angel who guards the portals twain oped, in the self-same breath,
To the child the pearly gate of life, to the mother the gate of death.

Father, and son, and an infant plucking the daisies over a grave:
The swell of a boundless surge keeps on, wave following after wave;
Ever the tide of life sets toward the low invisible shore:
Whence had the current its distant source? when shall it flow no more?

2

Nature's serene renewals, that make the scion by one remove
Bear the ancestral blossom and thrive as the forest wilding throve!
Roseate stream of life, which hides the course its ducts pursue,
To rise, like that Sicilian fount, in far-off springs anew!

For the grandsire's vigor, rude and rare, asleep in the son had lain,
To waken in Hugh, the grandson's frame, with the ancient force again;

And ere the boy, said the Monmouth wives, had grown to
his seventh year,
Well could you tell whose mantling blood swelled in his
temples clear.

Tall, and bent in the meeting brows; swarthy of hair and
face;
Shoulders parting square, but set with the future hunts-
man's grace;
Eyes alive with a fire which yet the old man's visage wore
At times, like the flash of a thunder-cloud when the storm
is almost o'er.

3

Toward the mettled stripling, then, the heart of the old
man yearned;
And thus — while Hermann Van Ghelt once more, with a
restless hunger, turned
From the grave of her who died so young, to his books and
lawyer's gown,
And the ceaseless clangor of mind with mind in the close
and wrangling town —

They two, the boy and the grandsire, lived at the manor-
house, and grew,
The one to all manly arts apace, the other a youth anew —
Pleased with the boy's free spirit, and teaching him, step by
step, to wield
The mastery over living things, and the craft of flood and field.

Apt, indeed, was the scholar; and born with a subtle art to
gain
The love of all dumb creatures at will; now lifting himself,
by the mane,
Over the neck of the three-year colt, for a random bare-
back ride,
Now chasing the waves on the rifted beach at the turn of
the evening tide.

Proud, in sooth, was the master: the youngster, he oft and roundly swore,
Was fit for the life of a gentleman led in the lusty days of yore!
And he took the boy wherever he drove,— to a county fair or race;
Gave him the reins and watched him guide the span at a spanking pace;

Taught him the sportsman's keen delight: to swallow the air of morn,
And start the whistling quail that hides and feeds in the dewy corn;
Or in clear November underwoods to bag the squirrels, and flush
The brown-winged, mottled partridge a-whir from her nest in the tangled brush;

Taught him the golden harvest laws, and the signs of sun and shower,
And the thousand beautiful secret ways of graft and fruit and flower;
Set him straight in his saddle, and cheered him galloping over the sand;
Sailed with him to the fishing-shoals and placed the helm in his hand.

Often the yacht, with all sail spread, was steered by the fearless twain
Around the beacon of Sandy Hook, and out in the open main;
Till the great sea-surges rolling in, as south-by-east they wore,
Lifted the bows of the dancing craft, and the buoyant hearts she bore.

But in dreamy hours, which young men know, Hugh loved with the tide to float
Far up the deep, dark-channeled creeks, alone in his two-oared boat;

While a fiery woven tapestry o'erhung the waters low,
The warp of the frosted chestnut, the woof with maple and
birch aglow;

Picking the grapes which dangled down; or watching the
autumn skies,
The osprey's slow imperial swoop, the scrawny heron's rise;
Nursing a longing for larger life than circled a rural home,
An instinct of leadership within, and of action yet to come.

4

Curtain of shifting seasons dropt on moor and meadow and
hall,
Open your random vistas of changes that come with time
to all!
Hugh grown up to manhood; foremost, searching the
county through,
Of the Monmouth youth, in birth and grace, and the
strength to will and do.

The father, past the prime of life, and his temples flecked
with toil,
A bookman still, and leaving to Hugh the care of stock and
soil.
Hendrick Van Ghelt, a bowed old man in a fireside-corner
chair,
Counting the porcelain Scripture tiles which frame the
chimney there, —

The shade of the stalwart gentleman the people used to
know,
Forgetful of half the present scenes, but mindful of long-
ago;
Aroused, mayhap, by growing murmurs of Southern feud,
that came
And woke anew in his fading eyes a spark of their ancient
flame.

5

Gazing on such a group as this, folds of the curtain drop,
Hiding the grandsire's form; and the wheels of the sliding picture stop.
Gone, that stout old Hendrick, at last! and from miles around they came, —
Farmer, and squire, and whispering youths, recalling his manhood's fame.

Dead: and the Van Ghelt manor closed, and the homestead acres leased;
For their owner had moved more near the town, where his daily tasks increased,
Choosing a home on the blue Passaic, whence the Newark spires and lights
Were seen, and over the salt sea-marsh the shadows of Bergen Heights.

Back and forth from his city work, the lawyer, day by day,
With the press of eager and toiling men, followed his wonted way;
And Hugh, — he dallied with life at home, tending the garden and grounds;
But the mansion longed for a woman's voice to soften its lonely sounds.

"Hugh," said Hermann Van Ghelt, at length, "choose for yourself a wife,
Comely, and good, and of birth to match the mother who gave you life.
No words of woman have charmed my ear since last I heard her voice;
And of fairest and proudest maids her son should make a worthy choice."

But now the young man's wandering heart from the great
world turned away,
To long for the healthful Monmouth meads, the shores of
the breezy bay;
And often the scenes and mates he knew in boyhood he
sought again,
And roamed through the well-known woods, and lay in the
grass where he once had lain.

III

Ladies, in silks and laces,
Lunching with lips that gleam,
Know you aught of the places
Yielding such fruit and cream?

South from your harbor-islands
Glisten the Monmouth hills;
There are the ocean highlands,
Lowland meadows and rills,

Berries in field and garden,
Trees with their fruitage low,
Maidens (asking your pardon)
Handsome as cities show.

Know you that, night and morning,
A beautiful water-fay,
Covered with strange adorning,
Crosses your rippling bay?

Her sides are white and sparkling;
She whistles to the shore;
Behind, her hair is darkling,
And the waters part before.

Lightly the waves she measures
  Up to the wharves of the town;
There, unlading her treasures,
  Lovingly puts them down.

Come with me, ladies; cluster
  Here on the western pier;
Look at her jewels' lustre,
  Changed with the changing year!

First of the months to woo her,
  June his strawberries flings
Over her garniture,
  Bringing her exquisite things;

Rifling his richest casket;
  Handing her, everywhere,
Garnets in crate and basket;
  Knowing she soon will wear

Blackberry jet and lava,
  Raspberries ruby-red,
Trinkets that August gave her,
  Over her toilet spread.

After such gifts have faded,
  Then the peaches are seen,—
Coral and ivory braided,
  Fit for an Indian queen.

And September will send her,
  Proud of his wealth, and bold,
Melons glowing in splendor,
  Emeralds set with gold.

So she glides to the Narrows,
  Where the forts are astir:

Her speed is a shining arrow's!
Guns are silent for her.

So she glides to the ringing
Bells of the belfried town,
Kissing the wharves, and flinging
All of her jewels down.

Whence she gathers her riches,
Ladies, now would you see?
Leaving your city niches,
Wander awhile with me.

IV

1

The strawberry-vines lie in the sun,
Their myriad tendrils twined in one;
Spread like a carpet of richest dyes,
The strawberry-field in sunshine lies.
Each timorous berry, blushing red,
Has folded the leaves above her head,
The dark green curtains gemmed with dew;
But each blushful berry, peering through,
Shows like a flock of the underthread,—
The crimson woof of a downy cloth
Where the elves may kneel and plight their troth.

2

Run through the rustling vines, to show
Each picker an even space to go,
Leaders of twinkling cord divide
The field in lanes from side to side;
And here and there with patient care,
Lifting the leafage everywhere,
Rural maidens and mothers dot

The velvet of the strawberry-plot:
Fair and freckled, old and young,
With baskets at their girdles hung,
Searching the plants with no rude haste
Lest berries should hang unpicked, and waste: —
Of the pulpy, odorous, hidden quest,
First gift of the fruity months, and best.

3

Crates of the laden baskets cool
Under the trees at the meadow's edge,
Covered with grass and dripping sedge,
And lily-leaves from the shaded pool;
Filled, and ready to be borne
To market before the morrow morn.
Beside them, gazing at the skies,
Hour after hour a young man lies.
From the hillside, under the trees,
He looks across the field, and sees
The waves that ever beyond it climb,
Whitening the rye-slope's early prime;
At times he listens, listlessly,
To the tree-toad singing in the tree,
Or sees the catbird peck his fill
With feathers adroop and roguish bill.
But often, with a pleased unrest,
He lifts his glances to the west,
Watching the kirtles, red and blue,
Which cross the meadow in his view;
And he hears, anon, the busy throng
Sing the Strawberry-Pickers' Song, —
From the far hillside comes again
An echo of the old-time strain.
Sweetly the group their cadence keep;
Swiftly their hands the trailers sweep;
The vines are stripped and the song is sung,
A joyous labor for old and young;

For the blithe children, gleaning behind
The women, marvellous treasures find.

4

From the workers a maiden parts:
The baskets at her waistband shine
With berries that look like bleeding hearts
Of a hundred lovers at her shrine;
No Eastern girl were girdled so well
With silken belt and silver bell.
Her slender form is tall and strong;
Her voice is the sweetest in the song;
Her brown hair, fit to wear a crown,
Loose from its bonnet ripples down.
Toward the crates, that lie in the shade
Of the chestnut copse at the edge of the glade,
She moves from her mates, through happy rows
Of the children loving her as she goes.
Alice, *our Alice!* one and all,
Striving to stay her footsteps, call
(For children with skilful choice dispense
The largesse of their innocence);
But on, with a sister's smile, she moves
Into the darkness of the groves,
And deftly, daintily, one by one,
Shelters her baskets from the sun,
Under the network, fresh and cool,
Of lily-leaves from the crystal pool.

5

Turning her violet eyes, their rays
Glistened full in the young man's gaze;
And each at each, for a moment's space,
Looked with a diffident surprise.
"Heaven!" thought Hugh, "what artless grace
That laborer's daughter glorifies!
I never saw a fairer face,

I never heard a sweeter voice;
And oh! were she my father's choice,
My father's choice and mine were one
In the strawberry-field and morning sun."

V

Love, from that summer morn,
Melting the souls of these two;
Love, which some of you know
Who read this poem to-day —
Is it the same desire,
The strong, ineffable joy,
Which Jacob and Rachel felt,
When he served her father long years,
And the years were swift as days —
So great was the love he bore?
Race, advancing with time,
Growing in thought and deed,
Mastering land and sea,
Say, does the heart advance,
Are its passions more pure and strong?
They, like Nature, remain,
No more and no less than of yore.
Whoso conquers the earth, —
Winning its riches and fame,
Comes to the evening at last,
The sunset of threescore years,
Confessing that Love was real,
All the rest was a dream!
The sum of his gains is dross;
The song in his praise is mute;
The wreath of his laurels fades:
But the kiss of his early love
Still burns on his trembling lip,
The spirit of one he loved

Hallows his dreams at night.
A little while, and the scenes
Of the play of Life are closed;
Come, let us rest an hour,
And by the pleasant streams,
Under the fresh, green trees,
Let us walk hand and hand,
And think of the days that were.

VI

I

On river and height and salty moors the haze of autumn fell,
And the cloud of a troubled joy enwrapt the face of Hugh as well, —
The spell of a secret haunt that far from home his footsteps drew;
A love which over the brow of youth the mask of manhood threw.

Birds of the air to the father, at length, the common rumor brought:
"Your son," they sang, "in the cunning toils of a rustic lass is caught!"
"A fit betrothal," the lawyer said, "must make these follies cease;
Which shall it be? — the banker's ward? — Edith, the judge's niece?"

"Father, I pray" — said Hugh. "O yes!" out-leapt the other's mood,
"I hear of your wanton loiterings; they ill become your blood!
If you hold our name at such light worth, forbear to darken the life
Of this Alice Dale" — "No, Alice Van Ghelt! father, she is my wife."

2

Worldlings, who say the eagle should mate with eagle, after his kind,
Nor have learned from what far and diverse cliffs the twain each other find,
Yours is the old, old story, of age forgetting its wiser youth;
Of eyes which are keen for others' good and blind to an inward truth.

But the pride which closed the father's doors swelled in the young man's veins,
And he led his bride, in the sight of all, through the pleasant Monmouth lanes,
To the little farm his grandsire gave, years since, for a birthday gift:
Unto such havens unforeseen the barks of our fortune drift!

There, for a happy pastoral year, he tilled the teeming field,
Scattered the marl above his land, and gathered the orchard's yield;
And Alice, in fair and simple guise, kissed him at evenfall;
And her face was to him an angel's face, and love was all in all.

— What is this light in the southern sky, painting a red alarm?
What is this trumpet call, which sounds through peaceful village and farm, —
Jarring the sweet idyllic rest, stilling the children's throng,
Hushing the cricket on the hearth, and the lovers' evening song?

VII

1

War! war! war!
Manning of forts on land and ships for sea;
Innumerous lips that speak the righteous wrath
Of days which have been and again may be;
Flashing of tender eyes disdaining tears;
A pause of men with indrawn breath,
Knowing it awful for the people's will
Thus, thus to end the mellow years
Of harvest, growth, prosperity,
And bring the years of famine, fire, and death,
Though fear and a nation's shame are more awful still.

2

War! war! war!
A thundercloud in the South in the early Spring; —
The launch of a thunderbolt; and then,
With one red flare, the lightning stretched its wing,
And a rolling echo roused a million men!
Then the ploughman left his field;
The smith, at his clanging forge,
Forged him a sword to wield.
From meadow, and mountain-gorge,
And the Western plains, they came,
Fronting the storm and flame.
War! war! war!
Heaven aid the right!
God nerve the hero's arm in the fearful fight!
God send the women sleep, in the long, long night,
When the breasts on whose strength they leaned shall heave
no more!

VIII

1

SPAKE each mother to her son,
Ere an ancient field was won:
"Spartan, who me your mother call,
Our country is mother of us all;
In her you breathe, and move, and are.
In peace, for her to live — in war,
For her to die — is, gloriously,
A patriot to live and die!"

2

The times are now as grand as then
With dauntless women, earnest men;
For thus the mothers whom we know
Bade their sons to battle go;
And, with a smile, the loyal North
Sent her million freemen forth.

3

"What men should stronger-hearted be
Than we, who dwell by the open sea,
Tilling the lands our fathers won
In battle on the Monmouth Plains?
Ah! a memory remains,
Telling us what they have done,
Teaching us what we should do.
Let us send our rightful share,—
Hard-handed yeomen, horsemen rare,
A hundred riders fleet and true."

4

A hundred horsemen, led by Hugh:
"Were he still here," their captain thought,
"The brave old man who trained my youth,

What a leader he would make
Where the battle's topmost billows break!
The crimes which brought our land to ruth,
How in his soul they would have wrought!
God help me, no deed of mine shall shame
The honor of my grandsire's name;
And my father shall see how pure and good
Runs in these veins the olden blood."

5

Shore and inland their men have sent:
Away, to the mountain regiment,
The silver-hazed Potomac heights,
The circling raids, the hundred fights,
The booth, the bivouac, the tent.
Away, from the happy Monmouth farms,
To noontide marches, night alarms,
Death in the shadowy oaken glades,
Emptied saddles, broken blades, —
All the turmoil that soldiers know
Who gallop to meet a mortal foe,
Some to conquer, some to fall:
War hath its chances for one and all.

6

Heroes, who render up their lives
On the country's fiery altar-stone —
They do not offer themselves alone.
What shall become of the soldiers' wives?
They stay behind in the lonely cots,
Weeding the humble garden-plots;
Some to speed the needle and thread,
For the soldiers' children must be fed;
All to sigh, through the toilsome day,
And at night teach lisping lips to pray
For the fathers marching far away.

IX

1

Cloud and flame on the dark frontier,
Veiling the hosts embattled there:
Peace, and a boding stillness, here,
Where the wives at home repeat their prayer.

2

The weary August days are long;
The locusts sing a plaintive song,
The cattle miss their master's call
When they see the sunset shadows fall.
The youthful mistress, at even-tide,
Stands by the cedarn wicket's side,
With both hands pushing from the front
Her hair, as those who listen are wont;
Gazing toward the unknown South,
While silent whispers part her mouth:

3

"O, if a woman could only find
Other work than to wait behind,
Through midnight dew and noonday drouth, —
To wait behind, and fear, and pray!
O, if a soldier's wife could say, —
'Where thou goest, I will go;
Kiss thee ere thou meet'st the foe;
Where thou lodgest, worst or best,
Share and soothe thy broken rest!'
— Alas, to stifle her pain, and wait,
This was ever a woman's fate!
But the lonely hours at least may be
Passed a little nearer thee,
And the city thou guardest with thy life
Thou 'lt guard more fondly for holding thy wife."

4

Ah, tender heart of woman leal,
Supple as wax and strong as steel!
Thousands as faithful and as lone,
Following each some dearest one,
Found in those early months a home
Under the brightness of that dome
Whose argent arches for aye enfold
The hopes of a people in their hold, —
Irradiate, in the sight of all
Who guard the Capital's outer wall.
Lastly came one, amid the rest,
Whose form a sunburnt soldier prest,
As lovers embrace in respite lent
From unfulfilled imprisonment.
And Alice found a new content:
Dearer for perils that had been
Were short-lived meetings, far between;
Better, for dangers yet to be,
The moments she still his face could see.
These, for the pure and loving wife,
Were the silver bars that marked her life,
That numbered the days melodiously;
While, through all noble daring, Hugh
From a Captain to a Colonel grew,
And his praises sweetened every tongue
That reached her ear, — for old and young
Gave him the gallant leader's due.

X

1

Flight of a meteor through the sky,
Scattering firebrands, arrows, and death, —
A baleful year, that hurtled by
While ancient kingdoms held their breath.

2

The Capital grew aghast with sights
Flashed from the lurid river-heights,
Full of the fearful things sent down,
By demons haunting the middle air,
Into the hot, beleaguered town, —
All woful sights and sounds, which seem
The fantasy of a sickly dream :
Crowded wickedness everywhere ;
Everywhere a stifled sense
Of the noonday-striding pestilence ;
Every church, from wall to wall,
A closely-mattressed hospital ;
And ah ! our bleeding heroes, brought
From smouldering fields so vainly fought,
Filling each place where a man could lie
To gasp a dying wish — and die ;
While the sombre sky, relentlessly,
Covered the town with a funeral-pall,
A death-damp, trickling funeral-pall.

3

Always the dust and mire ; the sound
Of the rumbling wagon's ceaseless round,
The cannon jarring the trampled ground.
The sad, unvarying picture wrought
Upon the pitying woman's heart
Of Alice, the Colonel's wife, and taught
Her spirit to choose the better part, —
The labor of loving angels, sent
To men in their sore encompassment.
Daily her gentle steps were bent
Through the thin pathways which divide
The patient sufferers, side from side,
In dolorous wards, where Death and Life
Wage their silent, endless strife ;

And she gave to all her soothing words,
Sweet as the songs of homestead birds.
Sometimes that utterance musical
On the soldier's failing sense would fall,
Seeming, almost, a prelude given
Of whispers that calm the air of Heaven;
While her white hand, moistening his poor lips
With the draught which slakeless fever sips,
Pointed him to that fount above,—
River of water of life and love,—
Stream without price, of whose purity
Whoever thirsteth may freely buy.

4

How many — whom in their mortal pain
She tended — 't was given her to gain,
Through Him who died upon the rood,
For that divine beatitude,
Who of us all can ever know
Till the golden books their records show?
But she saw their dying faces light,
And felt a rapture in the sight.
And many a sufferer's earthly life
Thanked for new strength the Colonel's wife;
Many a soldier turned his head,
Watching her pass his narrow bed,
Or, haply, his feeble frame would raise,
As the dim lamp her form revealed;
And, like the children in the field,
(For soldiers like little ones become,—
As simple in heart, as frolicsome,)
One and another breathed her name,
Blessing her as she went and came.

5

So, through all actions pure and good,
Unknowing evil, shame, or fear,

She grew to perfect ladyhood, —
Unwittingly the mate and peer
Of the proudest of her husband's blood.

XI

1

Like an affluent, royal town, the summer camps
Of a hundred thousand men are stretched away.
At night, like multitudinous city lamps,
Their numberless watch-fires beacon, clear and still,
And a glory beams from the zenith lit
With lurid vapors that over its star-lights flit;
But wreaths of opaline cloud o'erhang, by day,
The crystal-pointed tents, from hill to hill,
From vale to vale — until
The heavens on endless peaks their curtain lay.
A magical city! spread to-night
On hills which slope within our sight:
To-morrow, as at the waving of a wand,
Tents, guidons, bannerols are moved afar, —
Rising elsewhere, as rises a morning-star,
Or the dream of Aladdin's palace in fairy-land.

2

Camp after camp, like marble square on square;
Street following street, with many a park between;
Bright bayonet-sparkles in the tremulous air;
Far-fading, purple smoke above their sheen;
Green central fields with flags like flowers abloom;
And, all about, close-ordered, populous life:
But here no festering trade, no civic strife,
Only the blue-clad soldiers everywhere,
Waiting to-morrow's victory or doom, —
Men of the hour, to whom these pictures seem,
Like school-boy thoughts, half real, half a dream.

3

Camps of the cavalry, apart,
Are pitched with nicest art
On hilly suburbs where old forests grow.
Here, by itself, one glimmers through the pines,—
One whose high-hearted chief we know:
A thousand men leap when his bugles blow;
A thousand horses curvet at his lines,
Pawing the turf; among them come and go
The jacketed troopers, changed by wind and rain,
Storm, raid, and skirmish, sunshine, midnight dew,
To bronzèd men who never ride in vain.

4

In the great wall-tent at the head of the square,
The Colonel hangs his sword, and there
Huge logs burn high in front at the close of the day;
And the captains gather ere the long tattoo,
While the banded buglers play;
Then come the tales of home and the troopers' song.
Clear over the distant outposts float the notes,
And the lone vidette to catch them listens long;
And the officer of the guard, upon his round,
Pauses, to hear the sound
Of the chiming chorus poured from a score of throats:

5

CAVALRY SONG

Our good steeds snuff the evening air,
Our pulses with their purpose tingle;
The foeman's fires are twinkling there;
He leaps to hear our sabres jingle!
HALT!
Each carbine sends its whizzing ball:
Now, cling! clang! forward all,
Into the fight!

Dash on beneath the smoking dome,
  Through level lightnings gallop nearer!
One look to Heaven! No thoughts of home:
  The guidons that we bear are dearer.
    CHARGE!
  Cling! clang! forward all!
  Heaven help those whose horses fall!
    Cut left and right!

They flee before our fierce attack!
  They fall, they spread in broken surges!
Now, comrades, bear our wounded back,
  And leave the foeman to his dirges.
    WHEEL!
  The bugles sound the swift recall:
  Cling! clang! backward all!
    Home, and good night!

XII

I

WHEN April rains and the great spring-tide
Cover the lowlands far and wide,
And eastern winds blow somewhat harsh
Over the salt and mildewed marsh,
Then the grasses take deeper root,
Sucking, athirst and resolute;
And when the waters eddy away,
Flowing in trenches to Newark Bay,
The fibrous blades grow rank and tall,
And from their tops the reed-birds call.
Five miles in width the moor is spread;
Two broad rivers its borders thread;
The schooners which up their channels pass
Seem to be sailing in the grass,

Save as they rise with the moon-drawn sea,
Twice in the day, continuously.

2

Gray with an inward struggle grown,
The brooding lawyer, Hermann Van Ghelt,
Lived at the mansion-house, alone;
But a chilling cloud at his bosom felt,
Like the fog which crept, at morn and night,
Across the rivers in his sight,
And rising, left the moorland plain
Bare and spectral and cold again.
He saw the one tall hill, which stood
Huge with its quarry and gloaming wood,
And the creeping engines, as they hist
Through the dim reaches of the mist,—
Serpents, with ominous eyes aglow,
Thridding the grasses to and fro;
And he thought how each dark, receding train
Carried its freight of joy and pain,
On toil's adventure and fortune's quest,
To the troubled city of unrest;
And he knew that under the desolate pall
Of the bleak horizon, skirting all,
The burdened ocean heaved, and rolled
Its moaning surges manifold.

3

Often at evening, gazing through
The eastward windows on such a view,
Its sense enwrapt him as with a shroud;
Often at noon, in the city's crowd,
He saw, as 't were in a mystic glass,
Unbidden faces before him pass:
A soldier, with eyes unawed and mild
As the eyes of one who was his child;
A woman's visage, like that which blest

A year of his better years the best;
And the plea of a voice, remembered well,
Deep in his secret hearing fell.
And as week by week its records brought
Of heroes fallen as they fought,
There little by little awakenèd
In the lawyer's heart a shapeless dread,
A fear of the tidings which of all
On ear and spirit heaviest fall, —
Changeless sentence of mortal fate,
Freezing the marrow with — Too Late!

XIII

1

Thus, — when ended the morning tramp,
And the regiment came back to camp,
And the Colonel, breathing hard with pain,
Was carried within the lines again, —
Thus a Color-Sergeant told
The story of that skirmish bold:

2

"'T was an hour past midnight, twelve hours ago, —
We were all asleep, you know,
Save the officer on his rounds,
And the guard-relief, — when sounds
The signal-gun! once — twice —
Thrice! and then, in a trice,
The long assembly-call rang sharp and clear,
Till 'Boots and Saddles' made us scamper like mice.
No time to waste
In asking whether a fight was near;
Over the horses went their traps in haste;
Not ten minutes had past
Ere we stood in marching gear,

And the call of the roll was followed by orders fast:
'Prepare to mount!'
'Mount!'—and the company ranks were made;
Then in each rank, by fours, we took the count,
And the head of the column wheeled for the long parade.

3

"There, on the beaten ground,
The regiment formed from right to left;
Our Colonel, straight in his saddle, looked around,
Reining the stallion in, that felt the heft
Of his rider, and stamped his foot, and wanted to dance.
At last the order came:
'By twos: forward, march!'—and the same
From each officer in advance;
And, as the rear-guard left the spot,
We broke into the even trot.

4

"'Trot, march!'—two by two,
In the dust and in the dew,
Roads and open meadows through.
Steadily we kept the tune
Underneath the stars and moon.
None, except the Colonel, knew
What our orders were to do;
Whether on a forage-raid
We were tramping, boot and blade,
Or a close reconnoissance
Ere the army should advance;
One thing certain, we were bound
Straight for Stuart's camping-ground.
Plunging into forest-shade,
Well we knew each glen and glade!
Sweet they smelled, the pine and oak,
And of home my comrade spoke.

Tramp, tramp, out again,
Sheer across the ragged plain,
Where the moonbeams glaze our steel
And the fresher air we feel.
Thus a triple league, and more,
Till behind us spreads the gray,
Pallid light of breaking day,
And on cloudy hills, before,
Rebel camp-fires smoke away.
Hard by yonder clump of pines,
We should touch the rebel lines:
'Walk, march!' and, softly now,
Gain yon hillock's westward brow.

5

"'Halt!' and 'Right into line!' — There on the ridge
In battle-order, we let the horses breathe;
The Colonel raised his glass and scanned the bridge,
The tents on the bank beyond, the stream beneath.
Just then the sun first broke from the redder east,
And their pickets saw five hundred of us, at least,
Stretched like a dark stockade against the sky;
We heard their long-roll clamor loud and nigh:
In half a minute a rumbling battery whirled
To a mound in front, unlimbering with a will,
And a twelve-pound solid shot came right along,
Singing a devilish morning-song,
And touched my comrade's leg, and the poor boy curled
And dropt to the turf, holding his bridle still.
Well, we moved out of range, — were wheeling round,
I think, for the Colonel had taken his look at their ground,
(Thus he was ordered, it seems, and nothing more:
Hardly worth coming at midnight for!)
When, over the bridge, a troop of the enemy's horse
Dashed out upon our course,
Giving us hope of a tussle to warm our blood.
Then we cheered, to a man, that our early call

Had n't been sounded for nothing, after all;
And halting, to wait their movements, the column stood.

6

"Then into squadrons we saw their ranks enlarge,
And slow and steady they moved to the charge,
Shaking the ground as they came in carbine-range.
'Front into line! March! Halt! Front!'
Our Colonel cried; and in squadrons, to meet the brunt,
We too from the walk to the trot our paces change:
'Gallop, march!' — and, hot for the fray,
Pistols and sabres drawn, we canter away.

7

"Twenty rods over the slippery clover
We galloped as gayly as lady and lover;
Held the reins lightly, our good weapons tightly,
Five solid squadrons all shining and sightly;
Not too fast, half the strength of our brave steeds to wasten,
Not too slow, for the warmth of their fire made us hasten,
As it came with a rattle and opened the battle,
Tumbling from saddles ten fellows of mettle.
So the distance grew shorter, their sabres shone broader;
Then the bugle's wild blare and the Colonel's loud order, —

"CHARGE!" and we sprang, while the far echo rang,
And their bullets, like bees, in our ears fiercely sang.
Forward we strode to pay what we owed,
Right at the head of their column we rode;
Together we dashed, and the air reeled and flashed;
Stirrups, sabres, and scabbards all shattered and crashed
As we cut in and out, right and left, all about,
Hand to hand, blow for blow, shot for shot, shout for shout,
Till the earth seemed to boil with the heat of our toil.
But in less than five minutes we felt them recoil,
Heard their shrill rally sound, and, like hares from the hound,

Each ran for himself: one and all fled the ground!
Then we goaded them up to their guns, where they cowered,
And the breeze cleared the field where the battle-cloud lowered.
Threescore of them lay, to teach them the way
Van Ghelt and his rangers their compliments pay.
But a plenty, I swear, of our saddles were bare;
Friend and foe, horse and rider, lay sprawled everywhere:
'T was hard hitting, you see, Sir, that gained us the day!

8

"Yes, they too had their say before they fled,
And the loss of our Colonel is worse than all the rest.
One of their captains aimed at him, as he led
The foremost charge — I shot the rascal dead,
But the Colonel fell, with a bullet through his breast.
We lifted him from the mire, when the field was won,
And their captured colors shaded him from the sun
In the farmer's wagon we took for his homeward ride;
But he never said a word, nor opened his eyes,
Till we reached the camp. In yon hospital tent he lies,
And his poor young wife will come to watch by his side.
The surgeon has n't found the bullet, as yet,
But he says it 's a mortal wound. Where will you get
Another such man to lead us, if he dies?"

XIV

1

Sprung was the bow at last;
And the barbed and pointed dart,
Keen with stings of the past,
Barbed with a vain remorse,
Clove for itself a course

Straight to the father's heart;
And a lonely wanderer stood,
Mazed in a mist of thought,
On the edge of a field of blood.
— For a battle had been fought,
And the cavalry skirmish was but a wild prelude
To the broader carnage that heaped a field in vain:
A terrible battle had been fought,
Till its changeful current brought
Tumultuous, angry surges roaring back
To the lines where our army had lain.
The lawyer, driven hard by an inward pain,
Was crossing, in search of a dying son, the track
Where the deluge rose and fell, and its stranded wrack
Had sown the loathing earth with human slain.

2

Friends and foes, — who could discover which,
As they marked the zigzag, outer ditch,
Or lay so cold and still in the bush,
Fallen and trampled down in the last wild rush?
Then the shattered forest-trees; the clearing there
Where a battery stood; dead horses, pawing the air
With horrible upright hoofs; a mangled mass
Of wounded and stifled men in the low morass;
And the long trench dug in haste for a burial-pit,
Whose yawning length and breadth all comers fit.

3

And over the dreadful precinct, like the lights
That flit through graveyard walks in dismal nights,
Men with lanterns were groping among the dead,
Holding the flame to every hueless face,
And bearing those whose life had not wholly fled
On stretchers, that looked like biers, from the ghastly place.

4

The air above seemed heavy with errant souls,
Dense with ghosts from those gory forms arisen,—
Each rudely driven from its prison,
'Mid the harsh jar of rattling musket-rolls,
And quivering throes, and unexpected force;
In helpless waves adrift confusedly,
Freighting the sombre haze without resource.
Through all there trickled, from the pitying sky,
An infinite mist of tears upon the ground,
Muffling the groans of anguish with its sound.

5

On the borders of such a land, on the bounds of Death,
The stranger, shuddering, moved as one who saith:
"God! what a doleful clime, a drear domain!"
And onward, struggling with his pain,
Traversed the endless camp-fires, spark by spark,
Past sentinels that challenged from the dark,
Guided through camp and camp to one long tent
Whose ridge a flying bolt from the field had rent
Letting the midnight mist, the battle din,
Fall on the hundred forms that writhed within.

6

Beyond the gaunt Zouave at the nearest cot,
And the bugler shot in the arm, who lay beside
(Looking down at the wounded spot
Even then, for all the pain, with boyish pride),
And a score of men, with blankets opened wide,
Showing the gory bandages which bound
The paths of many a deadly wound,
—Over all these the stranger's glances sped
To one low stretcher, at whose head
A woman, bowed and brooding, sate,
As sit the angels of our fate,

Who, motionless, our births and deaths await.
He whom she tended moaned and tost,
Restless, as some laborious vessel, lost
Close to the port for which we saw it sail,
Groans in the long perpetual gale;
But she, that watched the storm, forbore to weep.
Sometimes the stranger saw her move
To others, who also with their anguish strove;
But ever again her constant footsteps turned
To one who made sad mutterings in his sleep;
Ever she listened to his breathings deep,
Or trimmed the midnight lamp that feebly burned.

XV

Leaning her face on her hand,
She sat by the side of Hugh,
Silently watching him breathe,
As a lily curves its grace
Over the broken form
Of the twin which stood by its side.
A glory upon her head
Trailed from the light above,
Gilding her tranquil hair.
There, as she sat in a trance,
Her soul flowed through the past,
As a river, day and night,
Passes through changeful shores,—
Sees on the twofold bank,
Meadow and mossy grange,
Castles on hoary crags,
Forests, and fortressed towns,
And shrinks from the widening bay,
And the darkness which overhangs
The unknown, limitless sea.
Was it a troubled dream,
All that the stream of her life

Had mirrored along its course?
All — from that summer morn
When she seemed to meet in the field
One whom she vowed to love,
And with whom she wandered thence,
Leaving the home of her youth?
Were they visions indeed, —
The pillars of smoke and flame,
The sound of a hundred fights,
The grandeur, and ah! the gloom,
The shadows which circled her now,
And the wraith of the one she loved
Gliding away from her grasp,
Vanishing swiftly and sure?
Yes, it was all a dream;
And the strange, sad man, who moved
To the other side of the couch,
Bending over it long,
Pressing his hand on his heart,
And gazing, anon, in her eyes, —
He, with his scanty hair,
And pallid, repentant face,
He, too, was a voiceless dream,
A vision like all the rest;
He with the rest would fade
When the day should dawn again,
When the spectral mist of night,
Fused with the golden morn,
Should melt in the eastern sky.

XVI

I

"Steady! forward the squadron!" cries
The dying soldier, and strives amain
To rise from the pillow and his pain.
Wild and wandering are his eyes,

Painting once more, on the empty air,
The wrathful battle's wavering glare.
"Hugh!" said Alice, and checked her fear,
"Speak to me, Hugh; your father is here."
"Father! what of my father? he
Is anything but a father to me;
What need I of a father, when
I have the hearts of a thousand men?"
"— Alas, Sir, he knows not me nor you!"
And with caressing words, the twain —
The man with all remorsefulness,
The woman with loving tenderness —
Soothed the soldier to rest anew,
And, as the madness left his brain,
Silently watched his sleep again.

2

And again the father and the wife,
Counting the precious sands of life,
Looked each askance, with those subtle eyes,
That probe through human mysteries
And hidden motives fathom well;
But the mild regard of Alice fell,
Meeting the other's contrite glance,
On his meek and furrowed countenance,
Scathed, as it seemed, with troubled thought:
"Surely, good angels have with him wrought,"
She murmured, and halted, even across
The sorrowful threshold of her loss,
To pity his thin and changing hair,
And her heart forgave him, unaware.

3

And he, — who saw how she still represt
A drear foreboding within her breast,
And, by her wifehood's nearest right,
Ever more closely through the night

Clave unto him whose quickened breath
Came like a waft from the realm of Death, —
He felt what a secret, powerful tie
Bound them in one, mysteriously.
He studied her features, as she stood
Lighting the shades of that woful place
With the presence of her womanhood,
And thought — as the dying son had thought
When her beauty first his vision caught —
"I never saw a fairer face;
I never heard a sweeter voice!"
And a sad remembrance travelled fast
Through all the labyrinth of the past,
Till he said, as the scales fell off at last,
"How could I blame him for his choice?"
Then he looked upon the sword, which lay
At the headboard, under the night-lamp's ray;
He saw the coat, the stains, the dust,
The gilded eagles worn with rust,
The swarthy forehead and matted hair
Of the strong, brave hero lying there;
And he felt how gently Hugh held command, —
The life how gallant, the death how grand;
And with trembling lips, and the words that choke,
And the tears which burn the cheek, he spoke:
"Where is the father who would not joy
In the manhood of such a noble boy?
This life, which had being through my own,
Was a better life than I have known;
O that its fairness should be earth,
Ere I could prize it at its worth!"
"Too late! too late!" — he made his moan —
"I find a daughter, and her alone.
He deemed you worthy to bear his name,
His spotless honor, his lasting fame:
I, who have wronged you, bid you live
To comfort the lonely — and forgive."

4

Dim and silvery from the east
The infant light of another morn
Over the stirring camps was borne;
But the soldier's pulse had almost ceased,
And there crept upon his brow the change —
Ah, how sudden! alas, how strange!
Yet again his eyelids opened wide,
And his glances moved to either side,
This time with a clear intelligence
Which took all objects in its sense,
A power to comprehend the whole
Of the scene that girded his passing soul.
The father, who saw it, slowly drew
Nearer to her that wept anew,
And gathered her tenderly in his hold, —
As mortals their precious things enfold,
Grasping them late and sure; and Hugh
Gazed on the two a space, and smiled
With the look he wore when a little child, —
A smile of pride and peace, that meant
A free forgiveness, a full content;
Then his clouding sight an instant clung
To the flag whose stars above him hung,
And his blunted senses seemed to hear
The long reveillée sounding near;
But the ringing clarion could not vie
With the richer notes which filled his ear,
Nor the breaking morn with that brighter sky.

XVII

1

WEAR no armor, timid heart;
Fear no keen misfortune's dart,
Want, nor scorn, nor secret blow
Dealt thee by thy mortal foe.

2

Let the Fates their weapons wield,
For a wondrous woven shield
Shall be given thee, erelong.
Mesh of gold were not so strong;
Not so soft were silken shred;
Not so fine the spider's thread
Barring the enchanted door
In that tale of ancient lore,
Guarding, silently and well,
All within the mystic cell.
Such a shield, where'er thou art,
Shall be thine, O wounded heart!
From the ills that compass thee
Thou behind it shalt be free;
Envy, slander, malice, all
Shall withdraw them from thy — Pall.

3

Build no house with patient care,
Fair to view, and strong as fair;
Walled with noble deeds' renown;
Shining over field and town,
Seen from land and sea afar,
Proud in peace, secure in war.
For the moments never sleep,
Building thee a castle-keep, —
Proof alike 'gainst heat and cold,

Earthly sorrows manifold,
Sickness, failure of thine ends,
And the falling off of friends.
Treason, want, dishonor, wrong,
None of these shall harm thee long.
Every day a beam is made;
Hour by hour a stone is laid.
Back the cruellest shall fall
From the warder at the wall;
Foemen shall not dare to tread
On the ramparts o'er thy head;
Dark, triumphant flags shall wave
From the fastness of thy — Grave.

XVIII

1

THERE 's an hour, at the fall of night, when the blissful souls
Of those who were dear in life seem close at hand;
There 's a holy midnight hour, when we speak their names
In pauses between our songs on the trellised porch;
And we sing the hymns which they loved, and almost know
Their phantoms are somewhere with us, filling the gaps,
The sorrowful chasms left when they passed away;
And we seem, in the hush of our yearning voices, to hear
Their warm, familiar breathing somewhere near.

2

At such an hour, — when again the autumn haze
Silvered the moors, and the new moon peered from the west
Over the blue Passaic, and the mansion shone
Clear and white on the ridge which skirts the stream, —
At the twilight hour a man and a woman sat
On the open porch, in the garb of those who mourn.

Father and daughter they seemed; and with thoughtful eyes,
Silent, and full of the past, they watched the skies.

XIX

Silent they were, not sad; for the sod that covers the grave
Of those we have given to fame smells not of the hateful mould,
But of roses and fragrant ferns, while marvellous immortelles
Twine in glory above, and their graces give us joy.
Silent, but oh! not sad: for the babe on the couch within
Drank at the mother's breast, till the current of life, outdrawn,
Opened inflowing currents of faith and sweet content;
And the gray-haired man, repenting in tears the foolish past,
Had seen in the light from those inscrutable infant eyes,
Fresh from the unknown world, the glimpses which, long ago,
Gladdened his golden youth, and had found his soul at peace.

XX

I

Lastly the moon went down; like burnished steel
The infinite ether wrapt the crispy air.
Then, arm in arm on the terrace-walk, the pair
Moved in that still communion where we feel
No need of audible questions and replies,
But mutual pulses all our thoughts reveal;
And, as they turned to leave the outer night,
Far in the cloudless North a radiant sight
Stayed their steps for a while and held their eyes.

2

There, through the icy mail of the boreal heaven,
Two-edged and burning swords by unseen hands
Were thrust, till a climbing throng its path had riven
Straight from the Pole, and, over seas and lands,
Pushed for the zenith, while from East to West
Flamed many a towering helm and gorgeous crest;
And then, a rarer pageant than the rest,
An angrier light glared from the southern sky,
As if the austral trumpets made reply,
And the wrath of a challenged realm had swiftly tost
On the empyrean the flags of another host, —
Pennons with or and scarlet blazing high,
Crimson and orange banners proudly crost;
While through the environed space, that lay between
Their adverse fronts, the ether seemed to tremble,
Shuddering to view such ruthless foes assemble,
And one by one the stars withdrew their sheen.

3

The two, enrapt with such a vision, saw
Its ominous surges, dense, prismatic, vast,
Heaved from the round horizon; and in awe,
Musing awhile, were silent. Till at last
The younger, fair in widow's garments, spoke:
"See, father, how, from either pole,
The deep, innumerous columns roll;
As if the angelic tribes their concord broke,
And the fierce war that scathes our land had spread
Above, and the very skies with ire were red!"

4

Even as she spoke, there shone
High in the topmost zenith a central spark,
A luminous cloud that glowed against the dark;
Its halo, widening toward either zone,
Took on the semblance of a mystic hand

Stretched from an unknown height; and lo! a band
Of scintillant jewels twined around the wrist,
Sapphire and ruby, opal, amethyst,
Turquoise, and diamond, linked with flashing joints.
Its wide and puissant reach began to clasp,
In countless folds, the interclashing points
Of outshot light, gathering their angry hues —
North, south, east, west — with noiseless grasp,
By some divine, resistless law,
Till everywhere the wondering watchers saw
A thousand colors blend and interfuse,
In aureate wave on wave ascending higher, —
Immeasurable, white, a spotless fire;
And, glory circling glory there, behold
Gleams of the heavenly city walled with gold!

5

"Daughter," the man replied, (his face was bright
With the effulgent reflex of that light,)
"The time shall come, by merciful Heaven willed,
When these celestial omens shall be fulfilled,
Our strife be closed and the nation purged of sin,
And a pure and holier union shall begin;
And a jarring race be drawn, throughout the land,
Into new brotherhood by some strong hand;
And the baneful glow and splendor of war shall fade
In the whiter light of love, that, from sea to sea,
Shall soften the rage of hosts in arms arrayed,
And melt into share and shaft each battle-blade,
And brighten the hopes of a people great and free.
But, in the story told of a nation's woes,
Of the sacrifices made for a century's fault,
The fames of fallen heroes shall ever shine,
Serene, and high, and crystalline as those
Fair stars, which reappear in yonder vault;
In the country's heart their written names shall be,
Like that of a single one in mine and thine.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ASSASSINATED GOOD FRIDAY, 1865

"FORGIVE them, for they know not what they do!"
He said, and so went shriven to his fate,—
Unknowing went, that generous heart and true.
Even while he spoke the slayer lay in wait,
And when the morning opened Heaven's gate
There passed the whitest soul a nation knew.
Henceforth all thoughts of pardon are too late;
They, in whose cause that arm its weapon drew,
Have murdered Mercy. Now alone shall stand
Blind Justice, with the sword unsheathed she wore.
Hark, from the eastern to the western strand,
The swelling thunder of the people's roar:
What words they murmur,— Fetter not her hand!
So let it smite, such deeds shall be no more!

GETTYSBURG

WAVE, wave your glorious battle-flags, brave soldiers of the North,
And from the field your arms have won to-day go proudly forth!
For now, O comrades dear and leal,— from whom no ills could part,
Through the long years of hopes and fears, the nation's constant heart,—
Men who have driven so oft the foe, so oft have striven in vain,
Yet ever in the perilous hour have crossed his path again,—
At last we have our hearts' desire, from them we met have wrung

GETTYSBURG

A victory that round the world shall long be told and sung!
It was the memory of the past that bore us through the fray,
That gave the grand old Army strength to conquer on this day!

O now forget how dark and red Virginia's rivers flow,
The Rappahannock's tangled wilds, the glory and the woe;
The fever-hung encampments, where our dying knew full sore
How sweet the north-wind to the cheek it soon shall cool no more;
The fields we fought, and gained, and lost; the lowland sun and rain
That wasted us, that bleached the bones of our unburied slain!
There was no lack of foes to meet, of deaths to die no lack,
And all the hawks of heaven learned to follow on our track;
But henceforth, hovering southward, their flight shall mark afar
The paths of yon retreating hosts that shun the northern star.

At night, before the closing fray, when all the front was still,
We lay in bivouac along the cannon-crested hill.
Ours was the dauntless Second Corps; and many a soldier knew
How sped the fight, and sternly thought of what was yet to do.
Guarding the centre there, we lay, and talked with bated breath
Of Buford's stand beyond the town, of gallant Reynolds' death,

Of cruel retreats through pent-up streets by murderous volleys swept, —
How well the Stone, the Iron, Brigades their bloody outposts kept:
'T was for the Union, for the Flag, they perished, heroes all,
And we swore to conquer in the end, or even like them to fall.

And passed from mouth to mouth the tale of that grim day just done,
The fight by Round Top's craggy spur, — of all the deadliest one;
It saved the left: but on the right they pressed us back too well,
And like a field in Spring the ground was ploughed with shot and shell.
There was the ancient graveyard, its hummocks crushed and red,
And there, between them, side by side, the wounded and the dead:
The mangled corpses fallen above, — the peaceful dead below,
Laid in their graves, to slumber here, a score of years ago;
It seemed their waking, wandering shades were asking of our slain,
What brought such hideous tumult now where they so still had lain!

Bright rose the sun of Gettysburg that morrow morning-tide,
And call of trump and roll of drum from height to height replied.
Hark! from the east already goes up the rattling din;
The Twelfth Corps, winning back their ground, right well the day begin!

They whirl fierce Ewell from their front! Now we of the
Second pray,
As right and left the brunt have borne, the centre might
to-day.
But all was still from hill to hill for many a breathless
hour,
While for the coming battle-shock Lee gathered in his
power;
And back and forth our leaders rode, who knew not rest or
fear,
And along the lines, where'er they came, went up the ring-
ing cheer.

'T was past the hour of nooning; the Summer skies were
blue;
Behind the covering timber the foe was hid from view;
So fair and sweet with waving wheat the pleasant valley
lay,
It brought to mind our Northern homes and meadows far
away;
When the whole western ridge at once was fringed with
fire and smoke;
Against our lines from sevenscore guns the dreadful tempest
broke!
Then loud our batteries answer, and far along the crest,
And to and fro the roaring bolts are driven east and west;
Heavy and dark around us glooms the stifling sulphur-
cloud,
And the cries of mangled men and horse go up beneath its
shroud.

The guns are still: the end is nigh: we grasp our arms
anew;
O now let every heart be stanch and every aim be true!
For look! from yonder wood that skirts the valley's further
marge,
The flower of all the Southern host move to the final charge.

By Heaven! it is a fearful sight to see their double rank
Come with a hundred battle-flags, — a mile from flank to flank!
Tramping the grain to earth, they come, ten thousand men abreast;
Their standards wave, — their hearts are brave, — they hasten not, nor rest,
But close the gaps our cannon make, and onward press, and nigher,
And, yelling at our very front, again pour in their fire!

* Now burst our sheeted lightnings forth, now all our wrath has vent!
They die, they wither; through and through their wavering lines are rent.
But these are gallant, desperate men, of our own race and land,
Who charge anew, and welcome death, and fight us hand to hand:
Vain, vain! give way, as well ye may — the crimson die is cast!
Their bravest leaders bite the dust, their strength is failing fast;
They yield, they turn, they fly the field: we smite them as they run;
Their arms, their colors are our spoil; the furious fight is done!
Across the plain we follow far and backward push the fray:
Cheer! cheer! the grand old Army at last has won the day!

Hurrah! the day has won the cause! No gray-clad host henceforth
Shall come with fire and sword to tread the highways of the North!
'T was such a flood as when ye see, along the Atlantic shore,
The great Spring-tide roll grandly in with swelling surge and roar:

GETTYSBURG

It seems no wall can stay its leap or balk its wild desire
Beyond the bound that Heaven hath fixed to higher mount, and higher;
But now, when whitest lifts its crest, most loud its billows call,
Touched by the Power that led them on, they fall, and fall, and fall.
Even thus, unstayed upon his course, to Gettysburg the foe
His legions led, and fought, and fled, and might no further go.

Full many a dark-eyed Southern girl shall weep her lover dead;
But with a price the fight was ours, — we too have tears to shed!
The bells that peal our triumph forth anon shall toll the brave,
Above whose heads the cross must stand, the hillside grasses wave!
Alas! alas! the trampled grass shall thrive another year,
The blossoms on the apple-boughs with each new Spring appear,
But when our patriot-soldiers fall, Earth gives them up to God;
Though their souls rise in clearer skies, their forms are as the sod;
Only their names and deeds are ours, — but, for a century yet,
The dead who fell at Gettysburg the land shall not forget.

God send us peace! and where for aye the loved and lost recline
Let fall, O South, your leaves of palm, — O North, your sprigs of pine!
But when, with every ripened year, we keep the harvest-home,
And to the dear Thanksgiving-feast our sons and daughters come,

When children's children throng the board in the old
homestead spread,
And the bent soldier of these wars is seated at the head,
Long, long the lads shall listen to hear the gray-beard tell
Of those who fought at Gettysburg and stood their ground
so well:
"'Twas for the Union and the Flag," the veteran shall say,
"Our grand old Army held the ridge, and won that glorious
day!"

POEMS OF MANHATTAN

PETER STUYVESANT'S NEW YEAR'S CALL

1 JAN. A. D. 1661

WHERE nowadays the Battery lies,
New York had just begun,
A new-born babe, to rub its eyes,
In Sixteen Sixty-One.
They christened it Nieuw Amsterdam,
Those burghers grave and stately,
And so, with schnapps and smoke and psalm,
Lived out their lives sedately.

Two windmills topped their wooden wall,
On Stadthuys gazing down,
On fort, and cabbage-plots, and all
The quaintly gabled town;
These flapped their wings and shifted backs,
As ancient scrolls determine,
To scare the savage Hackensacks,
Paumanks, and other vermin.

At night the loyal settlers lay
Betwixt their feather-beds;
In hose and breeches walked by day,
And smoked, and wagged their heads.
No changeful fashions came from France,
The freulen to bewilder,
And cost the burgher's purse, perchance,
Its every other guilder.

In petticoats of linsey-red,
And jackets neatly kept,
The vrouws their knitting-needles sped
And deftly spun and swept.
Few modern-school flirtations there
Set wheels of scandal trundling,
But youths and maidens did their share
Of staid, old-fashioned bundling.

— The New Year opened clear and cold;
The snow, a Flemish ell
In depth, lay over Beeckman's Wold
And Wolfert's frozen well.
Each burgher shook his kitchen-doors,
Drew on his Holland leather,
Then stamped through drifts to do the chores,
Beshrewing all such weather.

But — after herring, ham, and kraut —
To all the gathered town
The Dominie preached the morning out,
In Calvinistic gown;
While tough old Peter Stuyvesant
Sat pewed in foremost station, —
The potent, sage, and valiant
Third Governor of the nation.

Prayer over, at his mansion hall,
With cake and courtly smile
He met the people, one and all,
In gubernatorial style;
Yet missed, though now the day was old,
An ancient fellow-feaster, —
Heer Govert Loockermans, that bold
Brewer and burgomeester;

Who, in his farm-house, close without
The picket's eastern end,

Sat growling at the twinge of gout
That kept him from his friend.
But Peter strapped his wooden peg,
When tea and cake were ended
(Meanwhile the sound remaining leg
Its high jack-boot defended),

A woolsey cloak about him threw,
And swore, by wind and limb,
Since Govert kept from Peter's view,
Peter would visit him;
Then sallied forth, through snow and blast,
While many a humble greeter
Stood wondering whereaway so fast
Strode bluff Hardkoppig Pieter.

Past quay and cowpath, through a lane
Of vats and mounded tans,
He puffed along, with might and main,
To Govert Loockermans;
Once there, his right of entry took,
And hailed his ancient crony:
"Myn Gód! in dese Manhattoes, Loock,
Ve gets more snow as money!"

To which, and after whiffs profound,
With doubtful wink and nod,
There came at last responsive sound:
"Yah, Peter; yah, Myn Gód!"
Then goedevrouw Marie sat her guest
Beneath the chimney-gable,
And courtesied, bustling at her best
To spread the New Year's table.

She brought the pure and genial schnapps,
That years before had come —
In the "Nieuw Nederlandts," perhaps —
To cheer the settlers' home;

The long-stemmed pipes; the fragrant roll
  Of pressed and crispy Spanish;
Then placed the earthen mugs and bowl,
  Nor long delayed to vanish.

Thereat, with cheery nod and wink,
  And honors of the day,
The trader mixed the Governor's drink
  As evening sped away.
That ancient room! I see it now:
  The carven nutwood dresser;
The drawers, that many a burgher's vrouw
  Begrudged their rich possessor;

The brace of high-backed leathern chairs,
  Brass-nailed at every seam;
Six others, ranged in equal pairs;
  The bacon hung abeam:
The chimney-front, with porcelain shelft;
  The hearty wooden fire;
The picture, on the steaming delft,
  Of David and Goliah.

I see the two old Dutchmen sit
  Like Magog and his mate,
And hear them, when their pipes are lit,
  Discuss affairs of state:
The clique that would their sway demean;
  The pestilent importation
Of wooden nutmegs, from the lean
  And losel Yankee nation.

But when the subtle juniper
  Assumed its sure command,
They drank the buxom loves that were, —
  They drank the Motherland;
They drank the famous Swedish wars,
  Stout Peter's special glory,

While Govert proudly showed the scars
Of Indian contests gory.

Erelong, the berry's power awoke
Some music in their brains,
And, trumpet-like, through rolling smoke,
Rang long-forgotten strains, —
Old Flemish snatches, full of blood,
Of phantom ships and battle;
And Peter, with his leg of wood,
Made floor and casement rattle.

Then round and round the dresser pranced,
The chairs began to wheel,
And on the board the punch-bowl danced
A Netherlandish reel;
Till midnight o'er the farm-house spread
Her New-Year's skirts of sable,
And, inch by inch, each puzzled head
Dropt down upon the table.

But still to Peter, as he dreamed,
That table spread and turned;
The chimney-log blazed high, and seemed
To circle as it burned;
The town into the vision grew
From ending to beginning;
Fort, wall, and windmill met his view,
All widening and spinning.

The cowpaths, leading to the docks,
Grew broader, whirling past,
And checkered into shining blocks, —
A city fair and vast;
Stores, churches, mansions, overspread
The metamorphosed island,
While not a beaver showed his head
From Swamp to Kalchook highland.

Eftsoons the picture passed away;
Hours after, Peter woke
To see a spectral streak of day
Gleam in through fading smoke;
Still slept old Govert, snoring on
In most melodious numbers;
No dreams of Eighteen Sixty-One
Commingled with his slumbers.

But Peter, from the farm-house door,
Gazed doubtfully around,
Rejoiced to find himself once more
On sure and solid ground.
The sky was somewhat dark ahead,
Wind east, and morning lowery;
And on he pushed, a two-miles' tread,
To breakfast at his Bouwery.

1861.

FUIT ILIUM

One by one they died,—
Last of all their race;
Nothing left but pride,
Lace, and buckled hose.
Their quietus made,
On their dwelling-place
Ruthless hands are laid:
Down the old house goes!

See the ancient manse
Meet its fate at last!
Time, in his advance,
Age nor honor knows;
Axe and broadaxe fall,
Lopping off the Past:
Hit with bar and maul,
Down the old house goes!

FUIT ILIUM

Sevenscore years it stood:
Yes, they built it well,
Though they built of wood,
When that house arose.
For its cross-beams square
Oak and walnut fell;
Little worse for wear,
Down the old house goes!

Rending board and plank,
Men with crowbars ply,
Opening fissures dank,
Striking deadly blows.
From the gabled roof
How the shingles fly!
Keep you here aloof, —
Down the old house goes!

Holding still its place,
There the chimney stands,
Stanch from top to base,
Frowning on its foes.
Heave apart the stones,
Burst its iron bands!
How it shakes and groans!
Down the old house goes!

Round the mantel-piece
Glisten Scripture tiles;
Henceforth they shall cease
Painting Egypt's woes,
Painting David's fight,
Fair Bathsheba's smiles,
Blinded Samson's might, —
Down the old house goes!

On these oaken floors
High-shoed ladies trod;

Through those panelled doors
Trailed their furbelows:
Long their day has ceased;
Now, beneath the sod,
With the worms they feast, —
Down the old house goes!

Many a bride has stood
In yon spacious room;
Here her hand was wooed
Underneath the rose;
O'er that sill the dead
Reached the family tomb:
All, that were, have fled, —
Down the old house goes!

Once, in yonder hall,
Washington, they say,
Led the New-Year's ball,
Stateliest of beaux.
O that minuet,
Maids and matrons gay!
Are there such sights yet?
Down the old house goes.

British troopers came
Ere another year,
With their coats aflame,
Mincing on their toes;
Daughters of the house
Gave them haughty cheer,
Laughed to scorn their vows, —
Down the old house goes!

Doorway high the box
In the grass-plot spreads;
It has borne its locks
Through a thousand snows;

In an evil day,
From those garden-beds
Now 't is hacked away, —
Down the old house goes!

Lo! the sycamores,
Scathed and scrawny mates,
At the mansion doors
Shiver, full of woes;
With its life they grew,
Guarded well its gates;
Now their task is through, —
Down the old house goes!

On this honored site
Modern trade will build, —
What unseemly fright
Heaven only knows!
Something peaked and high,
Smacking of the guild:
Let us heave a sigh, —
Down the old house goes!

BOHEMIA

A PILGRIMAGE

I

When buttercups are blossoming,
The poets sang, *'t is best to wed:*
So all for love we paired in Spring —
Blanche and I — ere youth had sped,
For Autumn's wealth brings Autumn's wane.
Sworn fealty to royal Art
Was ours, and doubly linked the chain,
With symbols of her high domain,
That twined us ever heart to heart;

And onward, like the Babes in the Wood,
We rambled, till before us stood
The outposts of Bohemia.

II

For, roaming blithely many a day,
Eftsoons our little hoard of gold,
Like Christian's follies, slipt away,
Unloosened from the pilgrim's hold,
But left us just as blithe and free;
Whereat our footsteps turned aside
From lord and lady of degree,
And bore us to that brave countree
Where merrily we now abide, —
That proud and humble, poor and grand,
Enchanted, golden Gypsy-Land,
The Valley of Bohemia.

III

Together from the higher clime,
By terraced cliff and copse along,
Adown the slant we stept, in time
To many another pilgrim's song,
And came where faded far away,
Each side, the kingdom's ancient wall,
From breaking into dying day;
Beyond, the magic valley lay,
With glimpse of shimmering stream and fall;
And here, between twin turrets, ran,
Built o'er with arch and barbacan,
The entrance to Bohemia.

IV

Beneath the lichened parapet
Grim-sculptured Gog and Magog bore
The Royal Arms, — Hope's Anchor, set
In azure, on a field of *or*,

With pendent mugs, and hands that wield
A lute and tambour, graven clear;
What seemed a poet's scroll revealed
The antique legend of the shield:
Gambrinus. Rex. helde. Wassaille. here.
Joyned. with. ye. Kinge. of. Pvetot.
O. worlde-worne. Pilgrim. passe. belowe.
To. entre. fayre. Bohemia.

V

No churlish warder barred the gate,
Nor other pass was needed there
Than equal heart for either fate,
And barren scrip, and hope to spare.
Through the gray archway, hand in hand,
We walked, beneath the rampart high,
And on within the wondrous land;
There, changed as by enchanter's wand,
My sweetheart, fairer to the eye
Than ever, moved along serene
In hood and cloak, — a gypsy queen,
Born princess of Bohemia!

VI

A fairy realm! where slope and stream,
Champaign and upland, town and grange,
Like shadowy shiftings of a dream,
Forever blend and interchange;
A magic clime! where, hour by hour,
Storm, cloud, and sunshine, fleeting by,
Commingle, and, through shine and shower,
Bright castles, lit with rainbows, tower,
Emblazoning the distant sky
With glimmering glories of a land
Far off, yet ever close at hand
As hope, in brave Bohemia.

VII

On either side the travelled way,
Encamped along the sunny downs,
The blithesome, bold Bohemians lay;
Or hid, in quaintly-gabled towns,
At smoke-stained inns of musty date,
And spider-haunted attic nooks
In empty houses of the great,
Still smacking of their ancient state, —
Strewn round with pipes and mouldy books,
And robes and buskins over-worn,
That well become the careless scorn
And freedom of Bohemia.

VIII

For, loving Beauty, and, by chance,
Too poor to make her all in all,
They spurn her half-way maintenance,
And let things mingle as they fall;
Dissevered from all other climes,
Yet compassing the whole round world,
Where'er are jests, and jousts at rhymes,
True love, and careless, jovial times,
Great souls by jilting Fortune whirled,
Men that were born before their day,
Kingly, without a realm to sway,
Yet monarchs in Bohemia;

IX

And errant wielders of the quill;
And old-world princes, strayed afar,
In threadbare exile chasing still
The glimpses of a natal star;
And Woman — taking refuge there
With woman's toil, and trust, and song,

And something of a piquant air
Defiant, as who must and dare
Steer her own shallop, right or wrong.
A certain noble nature schools,
In scorn of smaller, mincing rules,
The maidens of Bohemia.

X

But we pursued our pilgrimage
Far on, through hazy lengths of road,
Or crumbling cities gray with age;
And stayed in many a queer abode,
Days, seasons, years, — wherein were born
Of infant pilgrims, one, two, three;
And ever, though with travel worn,
Nor garnered for the morrow's morn,
We seemed a merry company, —
We, and the mates whom friendship, or
What sunshine fell within our door,
Drew to us in Bohemia.

XI

For Ambrose — priest without a cure —
Christened our babes, and drank the wine
He blessed, to make the blessing sure;
And Ralph, the limner — half-divine
The picture of my Blanche he drew,
As Saint Cecilia 'mong the caves, —
She singing; eyes a holy blue,
Upturned and rapturous; hair, in hue,
Gold rippled into amber waves.
There, too, is wayward, wild Annette,
Danseuse and warbler and grisette,
True daughter of Bohemia.

XII

But all by turns and nothing long;
And Rose, whose needle gains her bread;
And bookish Sibyl, — she whose tongue
The bees of Hybla must have fed;
And one — a poet — nowise sage
For self, but gay companion boon
And prophet of the golden age;
He joined us in our pilgrimage
Long since, one early Autumn noon
When, faint with journeying, we sate
Within a wayside hostel-gate
To rest us in Bohemia.

XIII

In rusty garb, but with an air
Of grace, that hunger could not whelm,
He told his wants, and — "Could we spare
Aught of the current of the realm —
A shilling?" — which I gave; and so
Came talk, and Blanche's kindly smile;
Whereat he felt his heart aglow,
And said: "Lo, here is silver! lo,
Mine host hath ale! and it were vile,
If so much coin were spent by me
For bread, when such good company
Is gathered in Bohemia."

XIV

Richer than Kaiser on his throne,
A royal stoup he bade them bring;
And so, with many of mine own,
His shilling vanished on the wing;
And many a skyward-floating strain
He sang, we chorusing the lay

Till all the hostel rang again;
But when the day began to wane,
Along the sequel of our way
He kept us pace; and, since that time,
We never lack for song and rhyme
To cheer us, in Bohemia.

XV

And once we stopped a twelvemonth, where
Five-score Bohemians began
Their scheme to cheapen bed and fare,
Upon a late-discovered plan;
"For see," they said, "the sum how small
By which one pilgrim's wants are met!
And if a host together fall,
What need of any cash at all?"
Though how it worked I half forget,
Yet still the same old dance and song
We found,—the kindly, blithesome throng
And joyance of Bohemia.

XVI

Thus onward through the Magic Land,
With varying chance. But once there past
A mystic shadow o'er our band,
Deeper than Want could ever cast,
For, oh, it darkened little eyes!
We saw our youngest darling die,
Then robed her in her palmer's guise,
And crossed the fair hands pilgrim-wise,
And, one by one, so tenderly,
Came Ambrose, Sibyl, Ralph, and Rose,
Strewing each sweetest flower that grows
In wildwoods of Bohemia.

XVII

But last the Poet, sorrowing, stood
Above the tiny clay, and said:
"Bright little Spirit, pure and good,
Whither so far away hast fled?
Full soon thou tryest that other sphere:
Whate'er is lacking in our lives
Thou dost attain; for Heaven is near,
Methinks, to pilgrims wandering here,
As to that one who never strives
With fortune, — has not come to know
The pride and pain that dwell so low
In valleys of Bohemia."

XVIII

He ceased, and pointed solemnly
Through western windows; and we saw
That lustrous castle of the sky
Gleam, touched with flame; and heard with awe,
About us, gentle whisperings
Of unseen watchers hovering near
Our dead, and rustling angel wings!
Now, whether this or that year brings
The valley's end, or, haply, here
Our pilgrimage for life must last,
We know not; but a sacred past
Has hallowed all Bohemia.

THE BALLAD OF LAGER BIER

In fallow college days, Tom Harland,
We both have known the ways of Yale,
And talked of many a nigh and far land,
O'er many a famous tap of ale.

THE BALLAD OF LAGER BIER

There still they sing their Gaudeamus,
And see the road to glory clear;
But taps, that in our day were famous,
Have given place to Lager Bier.

Now, settled in this island-city,
We let new fashions have their weight;
Though none too lucky — more 's the pity! —
Can still beguile our humble state
By finding time to come together,
In every season of the year,
In sunny, wet, or windy weather,
And clink our mugs of Lager Bier.

On winter evenings, cold and blowing,
'T is good to order "'alf-and-'alf";
To watch the fire-lit pewter glowing,
And laugh a hearty English laugh;
Or even a sip of mountain whiskey
Can raise a hundred phantoms dear
Of days when boyish blood was frisky,
And no one heard of Lager Bier.

We've smoked in summer with Oscanyan,
Cross-legged in that defunct bazaar,
Until above our heads the banyan
Or palm-tree seemed to spread afar;
And, then and there, have drunk his sherbet,
Tinct with the roses of Cashmere:
That Orient calm! who would disturb it
With Norseland calls for Lager Bier?

There 's Paris chocolate, — nothing sweeter,
At midnight, when the dying strain,
Just warbled by La Favorita,
Still hugs the music-haunted brain;

Yet of all bibulous compoundings,
Extracts or brewings, mixed or clear,
The best, in substance and surroundings,
For frequent use, is Lager Bier.

Karl Schaeffer is a stalwart brewer,
Who has above his vaults a hall,
Where — fresh-tapped, foaming, cool, and pure —
He serves the nectar out to all.
Tom Harland, have you any money?
Why, then, we 'll leave this hemisphere,
This western land of milk and honey,
For one that flows with Lager Bier.

Go, flaxen-haired and blue-eyed maiden,
My German Hebe! hasten through
Yon smoke-cloud, and return thou laden
With bread and cheese and bier for two.
Limburger suits this bearded fellow;
His brow is high, his taste severe:
But I 'm for Schweitzer, mild and yellow,
To eat with bread and Lager Bier.

Ah, yes! the Schweitzer hath a savor
Of marjoram and mountain thyme,
An odoriferous, Alpine flavor;
You almost hear the cow-bells chime
While eating it, or, dying faintly,
The *Ranz-des-vaches* entrance the ear,
Until you feel quite Swiss and saintly,
Above your glass of Lager Bier.

Here comes our drink, froth-crowned and sunlit,
In goblets with high-curving arms,
Drawn from a newly opened runlet,
As bier must be, to have its charms.

This primal portion each shall swallow
At one draught, for a pioneer;
And thus a ritual usage follow
Of all who honor Lager Bier.

Glass after glass in due succession,
Till, borne through midriff, heart, and brain,
He mounts his throne and takes possession,—
The genial Spirit of the grain!
Then comes the old Berserker madness
To make each man a priest and seer,
And, with a Scandinavian gladness,
Drink deeper draughts of Lager Bier!

Go, maiden, fill again our glasses!
While, with anointed eyes, we scan
The blouse Teutonic lads and lasses,
The Saxon — Pruss — Bohemian,
The sanded floor, the cross-beamed gables,
The ancient Flemish paintings queer,
The rusty cup-stains on the tables,
The terraced kegs of Lager Bier.

And is it Göttingen, or Gotha,
Or Munich's ancient Wagner Brei,
Where each Bavarian drinks his quota,
And swings a silver tankard high?
Or some ancestral Gast-Haus lofty
In Nuremberg — of famous cheer
When Hans Sachs lived, and where, so oft, he
Sang loud the praise of Lager Bier?

For even now some curious glamour
Has brought about a misty change!
Things look, as in a moonlight dream, or
Magician's mirror, quaint and strange.

Some weird, phantasmagoric notion
  Impels us backward many a year,
And far across the northern ocean,
  To Fatherlands of Lager Bier.

As odd a throng I see before us
  As ever haunted Brocken's height,
Carousing, with unearthly chorus,
  On any wild Walpurgis-night;
I see the wondrous art-creations!
  In proper guise they all appear,
And, in their due and several stations,
  Unite in drinking Lager Bier.

I see in yonder nook a trio:
  There's Doctor Faust, and, by his side,
Not half so love-distraught as Io,
  Is gentle Margaret, heaven-eyed;
That man in black beyond the waiter —
  I know him by his fiendish leer —
Is Mephistophiles, the traitor!
  And how he swigs his Lager Bier!

Strange if great Goethe should have blundered,
  Who says that Margaret slipt and fell
In Anno Domini Sixteen Hundred,
  Or thereabout; and Faustus, — well,
We won't deplore his resurrection,
  Since Margaret is with him here,
But, under her serene protection,
  May boldly drink our Lager Bier.

That bare-legged gypsy, small and lithy,
  Tanned like an olive by the sun,
Is little Mignon; sing us, prithee,
  Kennst Du das Land, my pretty one!

Ah, no! she shakes her southern tresses,
As half in doubt and more in fear;
Perhaps the elvish creature guesses
We 've had too much of Lager Bier.

There moves, full-bodiced, ripe, and human,
With merry smiles to all who come,
Karl Schaeffer's wife, — the very woman
Whom Rubens drew his Venus from!
But what a host of tricksome graces
Play round our fairy Undine here,
Who pouts at all the bearded faces,
And, laughing, brings the Lager Bier.

"Sit down, nor chase the vision farther,
You 're tied to Yankee cities still!"
I hear you, but so much the rather
Should Fancy travel where she will.
Yet let the dim ideals scatter;
One puff, and lo! they disappear;
The comet, next, or some such matter,
We 'll talk above our Lager Bier.

Now, then, your eyes begin to brighten,
And marvellous theories to flow;
A philosophic theme you light on,
And, spurred and booted, off you go!
If e'er — to drive Apollo's phaeton —
I need an earthly charioteer,
This tall-browed genius I will wait on,
And prime him first with Lager Bier.

But higher yet, in middle Heaven,
Your steed seems taking flight, my friend;
You read the secret of the Seven,
And on through trackless regions wend!

Don't vanish in the Milky Way, for
  This afternoon you 're wanted here;
Come back! come back! and help me pay for
  The bread and cheese and Lager Bier.

PAN IN WALL STREET

A. D. 1867

Just where the Treasury's marble front
  Looks over Wall Street's mingled nations;
Where Jews and Gentiles most are wont
  To throng for trade and last quotations;
Where, hour by hour, the rates of gold
  Outrival, in the ears of people,
The quarter-chimes, serenely tolled
  From Trinity's undaunted steeple, —

Even there I heard a strange, wild strain
  Sound high above the modern clamor,
Above the cries of greed and gain,
  The curbstone war, the auction's hammer;
And swift, on Music's misty ways,
  It led, from all this strife for millions,
To ancient, sweet-do-nothing days
  Among the kirtle-robed Sicilians.

And as it stilled the multitude,
  And yet more joyous rose, and shriller,
I saw the minstrel, where he stood
  At ease against a Doric pillar:
One hand a droning organ played,
  The other held a Pan's-pipe (fashioned
Like those of old) to lips that made
  The reeds give out that strain impassioned.

PAN IN WALL STREET

'T was Pan himself had wandered here
A-strolling through this sordid city,
And piping to the civic ear
The prelude of some pastoral ditty!
The demigod had crossed the seas, —
From haunts of shepherd, nymph, and satyr,
And Syracusan times, — to these
Far shores and twenty centuries later.

A ragged cap was on his head;
But — hidden thus — there was no doubting
That, all with crispy locks o'erspread,
His gnarlèd horns were somewhere sprouting;
His club-feet, cased in rusty shoes,
Were crossed, as on some frieze you see them,
And trousers, patched of divers hues,
Concealed his crooked shanks beneath them.

He filled the quivering reeds with sound,
And o'er his mouth their changes shifted,
And with his goat's-eyes looked around
Where'er the passing current drifted;
And soon, as on Trinacrian hills
The nymphs and herdsmen ran to hear him,
Even now the tradesmen from their tills,
With clerks and porters, crowded near him.

The bulls and bears together drew
From Jauncey Court and New Street Alley,
As erst, if pastorals be true,
Came beasts from every wooded valley;
The random passers stayed to list, —
A boxer Ægon, rough and merry,
A Broadway Daphnis, on his tryst
With Nais at the Brooklyn Ferry.

A one-eyed Cyclops halted long
In tattered cloak of army pattern,
And Galatea joined the throng, —
A blowsy, apple-vending slattern;
While old Silenus staggered out
From some new-fangled lunch-house handy,
And bade the piper, with a shout,
To strike up Yankee Doodle Dandy!

A newsboy and a peanut-girl
Like little Fauns began to caper:
His hair was all in tangled curl,
Her tawny legs were bare and taper;
And still the gathering larger grew,
And gave its pence and crowded nigher,
While aye the shepherd-minstrel blew
His pipe, and struck the gamut higher.

O heart of Nature, beating still
With throbs her vernal passion taught her, —
Even here, as on the vine-clad hill,
Or by the Arethusan water!
New forms may fold the speech, new lands
Arise within these ocean-portals,
But Music waves eternal wands, —
Enchantress of the souls of mortals!

So thought I, — but among us trod
A man in blue, with legal baton,
And scoffed the vagrant demigod,
And pushed him from the step I sat on.
Doubting I mused upon the cry,
"Great Pan is dead!" — and all the people
Went on their ways: — and clear and high
The quarter sounded from the steeple.

ISRAEL FREYER'S BID FOR GOLD

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1869

ZOUNDS! how the price went flashing through
Wall street, William, Broad street, New!
All the specie in all the land
Held in one Ring by a giant hand —
For millions more it was ready to pay,
And throttle the Street on hangman's-day.
Up from the Gold Pit's nether hell,
While the innocent fountain rose and fell,
Loud and higher the bidding rose,
And the bulls, triumphant, faced their foes.
It seemed as if Satan himself were in it:
Lifting it — one per cent a minute —
Through the bellowing broker, there amid,
Who made the terrible, final bid!
    High over all, and ever higher,
    Was heard the voice of Israel Freyer, —
A doleful knell in the storm-swept mart, —
"Five millions more! and for any part
    I'll give One Hundred and Sixty!"

Israel Freyer — the Government Jew —
Good as the best — soaked through and through
With credit gained in the year he sold
Our Treasury's precious hoard of gold;
Now through his thankless mouth rings out
The leaguers' last and cruellest shout!
Pity the shorts? Not they, indeed,
While a single rival's left to bleed!
Down come dealers in silks and hides,
Crowding the Gold Room's rounded sides,
Jostling, trampling each other's feet,
Uttering groans in the outer street;

Watching, with upturned faces pale,
The scurrying index mark its tale;
Hearing the bid of Israel Freyer,—
That ominous voice, would it never tire?
"Five millions more!—for any part,
(If it breaks your firm, if it cracks your heart,)
I'll give One Hundred and Sixty!"

One Hundred and Sixty! Can't be true!
What will the bears-at-forty do?
How will the merchants pay their dues?
How will the country stand the news?
What'll the banks—but listen! hold!
In screwing upward the price of gold
To that dangerous, last, particular peg,
They had killed their Goose with the Golden Egg!
Just there the metal came pouring out,
All ways at once, like a waterspout,
Or a rushing, gushing, yellow flood,
That drenched the bulls wherever they stood!
Small need to open the Washington main,
Their coffer-dams were burst with the strain!
It came by runners, it came by wire,
To answer the bid of Israel Freyer,
It poured in millions from every side,
And almost strangled him as he cried,—
"I'll give One Hundred and Sixty!"

Like Vulcan after Jupiter's kick,
Or the aphoristical Rocket's stick,
Down, down, down, the premium fell,
Faster than this rude rhyme can tell!
Thirty per cent the index slid,
Yet Freyer still kept making his bid,—
"One Hundred and Sixty for any part!"
—The sudden ruin had crazed *his* heart,

Shattered his senses, cracked his brain,
And left him crying again and again, —
Still making his bid at the market's top
(Like the Dutchman's leg that never could stop,)
"One Hundred and Sixty — Five Millions more!"
Till they dragged him, howling, off the floor.
The very last words that seller and buyer
Heard from the mouth of Israel Freyer —
A cry to remember long as they live —
Were, "I'll take Five Millions more! I'll give, —
I'll give One Hundred and Sixty!"

Suppose (to avoid the appearance of evil)
There's such a thing as a Personal Devil,
It would seem that his Highness here got hold,
For once, of a bellowing Bull in Gold!
Whether bull or bear, it would n't much matter
Should Israel Freyer keep up his clatter
On earth or under it (as, they say,
He is doomed) till the general Judgment Day,
When the Clerk, as he cites him to answer for 't,
Shall bid him keep silence in that Court!
But it matters most, as it seems to me,
That my countrymen, great and strong and free,
So marvel at fellows who seem to win,
That if even a Clown can only begin
By stealing a railroad, and use its purse
For cornering stocks and gold, or — worse —
For buying a Judge and Legislature,
And sinking still lower poor human nature,
The gaping public, whatever befall,
Will swallow him, tandem, harlots, and all!
While our rich men drivel and stand amazed
At the dust and pother his gang have raised,
And make us remember a nursery tale
Of the four-and-twenty who feared one snail.

What's bred in the bone will breed, you know;
Clowns and their trainers, high and low,
Will cut such capers, long as they dare,
While honest Poverty says its prayer.
But tell me what prayer or fast can save
Some hoary candidate for the grave,
The market's wrinkled Giant Despair,
Muttering, brooding, scheming there, —
Founding a college or building a church
Lest Heaven should leave him in the lurch!
Better come out in the rival way,
Issue your scrip in open day,
And pour your wealth in the grimy fist
Of some gross-mouthed, gambling pugilist;
Leave toil and poverty where they lie,
Pass thinkers, workers, artists, by,
Your pot-house fag from his counters bring
And make him into a Railway King!
Between such Gentiles and such Jews
Little enough one finds to choose:
Either the other will buy and use,
Eat the meat and throw him the bone,
And leave him to stand the brunt alone.

— Let the tempest come, that 's gathering near,
And give us a better atmosphere!

THE OLD PICTURE-DEALER

The second landing-place. Above,
  Sun-pictures for a shilling each.
Below, a haunt that Teutons love, —
  Beer, smoke, and pretzels all in reach,
Between the two, a mouldy nook
  Where loungers hunt for things of worth —
Engraving, curio, or book —
  Here drifted from all over Earth.

THE OLD PICTURE-DEALER

Be the day's traffic more or less,
  Old Brian seeks his Leyden chair
Placed in the anteroom's recess,
  Our connoisseur's securest lair:
Here, turning full the burner's rays,
  Holds long his treasure-trove in sight, —
Upon a painting sets his gaze
  Like some devoted eremite.

The book-worms rummage as they will,
  Loud roars the wonted Broadway din,
Life runs its hackneyed round, — but still
  One tireless boon can Brian win, —
Can picture in this modern time
  A life no more the world shall know,
And dream of Beauty at her prime
  In Parma, with Correggio.

Withered the dealer's face, and old,
  But wearing yet the first surprise
Of him whose eyes the light behold
  Of Italy and Paradise:
Forever blest, forever young,
  The rapt Madonna poises there,
Her praise by hovering cherubs sung,
  Her robes by ether buoyed, not air.

See from the graybeard's meerschaum float
  A cloud of incense! Day or night,
He needs must steal apart to note
  Her grace, her consecrating light.
With less ecstatic worship lay,
  Before his marble goddess prone,
The crippled poet, that last day
  When in the Louvre he made his moan.

Warm grows the radiant masterpiece,
  The sweetness of Correggio!
The visionary hues increase,
  Angelic lustres come and go;
And still, as still in Parma too, —
  In Rome, Bologna, Florence, all,—
Goes on the outer world's ado,
  Life's transitory, harsh recall.

A real Correggio? And here!
  Yes, to the one impassioned heart,
Transfiguring all, the strokes appear
  That mark the perfect master's art.
You question of the proof? You owe
  More faith to fact than fancy? Hush!
Look with expectant eyes, and know,
  With him, the hand that held the brush!

The same wild thought that warmed from stone
  The Venus of the monkish Gest,
The image of Pygmalion,
  Here finds Correggio confest.
And Art requires its votary:
  The Queen of Heaven herself may pine
When these quaint rooms no longer see
  The one that knew her all divine.

Ah, me! ah me, for centuries veiled!
  (The desolate Virgin then may say,)
Once more my rainbow tints are paled
  With that unquestioning soul away —
Whose faith compelled the sun, the stars,
  To yield their halos for my sake,
And saw through Time's obscuring bars
  The Parmese master's glory break!

1883.

THE DIAMOND WEDDING

O Love! Love! Love! what times were those,
Long ere the age of belles and beaux
And Brussels lace and silken hose,
When, in the green Arcadian close,
You married Psyche, under the rose,
With only the grass for bedding!
Heart to heart, and hand to hand,
You followed Nature's sweet command—
Roaming lovingly through the land,
Nor sighed for a Diamond Wedding.

So have we read, in classic Ovid,
How Hero watched for her beloved,
Impassioned youth, Leander.
She was the fairest of the fair,
And wrapt him round with her golden hair,
Whenever he landed cold and bare,
With nothing to eat and nothing to wear
And wetter than any gander;
For Love was Love, and better than money;
The slyer the theft, the sweeter the honey;
And kissing was clover, all the world over,
Wherever Cupid might wander.

So thousands of years have come and gone,
And still the moon is shining on,
Still Hymen's torch is lighted;
And hitherto, in this land of the West,
Most couples in love have thought it best
To follow the ancient way of the rest,
And quietly get united.

But now, True Love, you 're growing old —
Bought and sold, with silver and gold,

Like a house, or a horse and carriage!
Midnight talks,
Moonlight walks,
The glance of the eye and sweetheart sigh,
The shadowy haunts with no one by,
I do not wish to disparage;
But every kiss
Has a price for its bliss,
In the modern code of marriage;
And the compact sweet
Is not complete,
Till the high contracting parties meet
Before the altar of Mammon;
And the bride must be led to a silver bower,
Where pearls and rubies fall in a shower
That would frighten Jupiter Ammon!

I need not tell
How it befell,
(Since Jenkins has told the story
Over and over and over again,
In a style I cannot hope to attain,
And covered himself with glory!)
How it befell, one Summer's day,
The King of the Cubans strolled this way, —
King January's his name, they say, —
And fell in love with the Princess May,
The reigning belle of Manhattan;
Nor how he began to smirk and sue,
And dress as lovers who come to woo,
Or as Max Maretzek and Jullien do,
When they sit, full-bloomed, in the ladies' view,
And flourish the wondrous baton.

He was n't one of your Polish nobles,
Whose presence their country somehow troubles,
And so our cities receive them;

Nor one of your make-believe Spanish grandees,
Who ply our daughters with lies and candies,
Until the poor girls believe them.
No, he was no such charlatan —
Count de Hoboken Flash-in-the-pan,
Full of gasconade and bravado,
But a regular, rich Don Rataplan
Santa Claus de la Muscovado
Señor Grandisimo Bastinado!
His was the rental of half Havana
And all Matanzas; and Santa Ana,
Rich as he was, could hardly hold
A candle to light the mines of gold
Our Cuban owned, choke-full of diggers;
And broad plantations, that, in round figures,
Were stocked with at least five thousand niggers!

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may!"
The Señor swore to carry the day,
To capture the beautiful Princess May,
With his battery of treasure;
Velvet and lace she should not lack;
Tiffany, Haughwout, Ball & Black,
Genin and Stewart, his suit should back
And come and go at her pleasure;
Jet and lava — silver and gold —
Garnets — emeralds rare to behold —
Diamonds — sapphires — wealth untold
All were hers, to have and to hold;
Enough to fill a peck-measure!

He did n't bring all his forces on
At once, but like a crafty old Don,
Who many a heart had fought and won,
Kept bidding a little higher;
And every time he made his bid,
And what she said, and all they did—

'T was written down,
For the good of the town,
By Jeems, of *The Daily Flyer*.

A coach and horses, you 'd think, would buy
For the Don an easy victory ;
But slowly our Princess yielded.
A diamond necklace caught her eye,
But a wreath of pearls first made her sigh.
She knew the worth of each maiden glance,
And, like young colts, that curvet and prance,
She led the Don a deuce of a dance,
In spite of the wealth he wielded.

She stood such a fire of silks and laces,
Jewels, and golden dressing-cases,
And ruby brooches, and jets and pearls,
That every one of her dainty curls
Brought the price of a hundred common girls ;
Folks thought the lass demented !
But at last a wonderful diamond ring,
An infant Koh-i-noor, did the thing,
And, sighing with love, or something the same,
(What 's in a name ?)
The Princess May consented.

Ring ! ring the bells, and bring
The people to see the marrying !
Let the gaunt and hungry and ragged poor
Throng round the great Cathedral door,
To wonder what all the hubbub 's for,
And sometimes stupidly wonder
At so much sunshine and brightness, which
Fall from the church upon the rich,
While the poor get all the thunder.

Ring! ring, merry bells, ring!
O fortunate few,
With letters blue,
Good for a seat and a nearer view!
Fortunate few, whom I dare not name;
Dilettanti! Crême de la crême!
We commoners stood by the street façade
And caught a glimpse of the cavalcade;
We saw the bride
In diamonded pride,
With jewelled maidens to guard her side, —
Six lustrous maidens in tarletan.
She led the van of the caravan;
Close behind her, her mother
(Dressed in gorgeous *moire antique*,
That told, as plainly as words could speak,
She was more antique than the other,)
Leaned on the arm of Don Rataplan
Santa Claus dè la Muscovado
Señor Grandisimo Bastinado.
Happy mortal! fortunate man!
And Marquis of El Dorado!

In they swept, all riches and grace,
Silks and satins, jewels and lace;
In they swept from the dazzled sun,
And soon in the church the deed was done.
Three prelates stood on the chancel high:
A knot that gold and silver can buy
Gold and silver may yet untie,
Unless it is tightly fastened;
What's worth doing at all 's worth doing well,
And the sale of a young Manhattan belle
Is not to be pushed or hastened;
So two Very-Reverends graced the scene,
And the tall Archbishop stood between,
By prayer and fasting chastened.

The Pope himself would have come from Rome,
But Garibaldi kept him at home.
Haply these robed prelates thought
Their words were the power that tied the knot;
But another power that love-knot tied,
And I saw the chain round the neck of the bride, —
A glistening, priceless, marvellous chain,
Coiled with diamonds again and again,
As befits a diamond wedding;
Yet still 't was a chain, and I thought she knew it,
And half-way longed for the will to undo it,
By the secret tears she was shedding.

But is n't it odd, to think whenever
We all go through that terrible River, —
Whose sluggish tide alone can sever
(The Archbishop says) the Church decree,
By floating one into Eternity
And leaving the other alive as ever, —
As each wades through that ghastly stream,
The satins that rustle and gems that gleam
Will grow pale and heavy, and sink away
To the noisome River's bottom-clay;
Then the costly bride and her maidens six
Will shiver upon the banks of the Styx,
Quite as helpless as they were born, —
Naked souls, and very forlorn;
The Princess, then, must shift for herself,
And lay her royalty on the shelf;
She, and the beautiful Empress, yonder,
Whose robes are now the wide world's wonder,
And even ourselves, and our dear little wives,
Who calico wear each morn of their lives,
And the sewing girls, and *les chiffonniers*,
In rags and hunger, — a gaunt array, —
And all the grooms of the caravan —
Ay, even the great Don Rataplan

THE DIAMOND WEDDING

Santa Claus de la Muscovado
Señor Grandisimo Bastinado —
That gold-encrusted, fortunate man! —
All will land in naked equality :
The lord of a ribboned principality
  Will mourn the loss of his *cordon*.
Nothing to eat, and nothing to wear
Will certainly be the fashion there!
Ten to one, and I 'll go it alone,
Those most used to a rag and bone,
Though here on earth they labor and groan,
Will stand it best, as they wade abreast
  To the other side of Jordan.

POEMS OF NEW ENGLAND

THE DOORSTEP

The conference-meeting through at last,
We boys around the vestry waited
To see the girls come tripping past
Like snow-birds willing to be mated.

Not braver he that leaps the wall
By level-musket flashes litten,
Than I, that stepped before them all
Who longed to see me get the mitten.

But no, she blushed and took my arm!
We let the old folks have the highway,
And started toward the Maple Farm
Along a kind of lovers' by-way.

I can't remember what we said,
'T was nothing worth a song or story;
Yet that rude path by which we sped
Seemed all transformed and in a glory.

The snow was crisp beneath our feet,
The moon was full, the fields were gleaming;
By hood and tippet sheltered sweet,
Her face with youth and health was beaming.

The little hand outside her muff, —
O sculptor, if you could but mould it! —
So lightly touched my jacket-cuff,
To keep it warm I had to hold it.

To have her with me there alone, —
'T was love and fear and triumph blended.
At last we reached the foot-worn stone
Where that delicious journey ended.

The old folks, too, were almost home;
Her dimpled hand the latches fingered,
We heard the voices nearer come,
Yet on the doorstep still we lingered.

She shook her ringlets from her hood
And with a "Thank you, Ned," dissembled,
But yet I knew she understood
With what a daring wish I trembled.

A cloud passed kindly overhead,
The moon was slyly peeping through it,
Yet hid its face, as if it said,
"Come, now or never! do it! *do it!*"

My lips till then had only known
The kiss of mother and of sister,
But somehow, full upon her own
Sweet, rosy, darling mouth, — I kissed her!

Perhaps 't was boyish love, yet still,
O listless woman, weary lover!
To feel once more that fresh, wild thrill
I 'd give — but who can live youth over.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW

Once more on the fallow hillside, as of old, I lie at rest
For an hour, while the sunshine trembles through the walnut-tree to the west, —

Shakes on the rocks and fragrant ferns, and the berry-bushes
around;
And I watch, as of old, the cattle graze in the lower pasture-
ground.

Of the Saxon months of blossom, when the merle and mavis
sing,
And a dust of gold falls everywhere from the soft midsum-
mer's wing,
I only know from my poets, or from pictures that hither come,
Sweet with the smile of the hawthorn-hedge and the scent
of the harvest-home.

But July in our own New England — I bask myself in its
prime,
As one in the light of a face he loves, and has not seen for
a time!
Again the perfect blue of the sky; the fresh green woods; the
call
Of the crested jay; the tangled vines that cover the frost-
thrown wall:

Sounds and shadows remembered well! the ground-bee's
droning hum;
The distant musical tree-tops; the locust beating his drum;
And the ripened July warmth, that seems akin to a fire
which stole,
Long summers since, through the thews of youth, to soften
and harden my soul.

Here it was that I loved her — as only a stripling can,
Who dotes on a girl that others know no mate for the
future man;
It was well, perhaps, that at last my pride and honor out-
grew her art,
That there came an hour, when from broken chains I fled
— with a broken heart.

'T was well: but the fire would still flash up in sharp, heat-lightning gleams,
And ever at night the false, fair face shone into passionate dreams;
The false, fair form, through many a year, was somewhere close at my side,
And crept, as by right, to my very arms and the place of my patient bride.

Bride and vision have passed away, and I am again alone;
Changed by years; not wiser, I think, but only different grown:
Not so much nearer wisdom is a man than a boy, forsooth,
Though, in scorn of what has come and gone, he hates the ways of his youth.

In seven years, I have heard it said, a soul shall change its frame;
Atom for atom, the man shall be the same, yet not the same;
The last of the ancient ichor shall pass away from his veins,
And a new-born light shall fill the eyes whose earlier lustre wanes.

In seven years, it is written, a man shall shift his mood;
Good shall seem what was evil, and evil the thing that was good:
Ye that welcome the coming and speed the parting guest,
Tell me, O winds of summer! am I not half-confest?

For along the tide of this mellow month new fancies guide my helm,
Another form has entered my heart as rightful queen of the realm;

From under their long black lashes new eyes — half-blue,
half-gray —
Pierce through my soul, to drive the ghost of the old love
quite away.

Shadow of years! at last it sinks in the sepulchre of the
past, —
A gentle image and fair to see; but was my passion so
vast?
"For you," I said, "be you false or true, are ever life of
my life!"
Was it myself or another who spoke, and asked her to be
his wife?

For here, on the dear old hillside, I lie at rest again,
And think with a quiet self-content of all the passion and
pain,
Of the strong resolve and the after-strife; but the vistas
round me seem
So little changed that I hardly know if the past is not a
dream.

Can I have sailed, for seven years, far out in the open
world;
Have tacked and drifted here and there, by eddying cur-
rents whirled;
Have gained and lost, and found again; and now, for a
respite, come
Once more to the happy scenes of old, and the haven I
voyaged from?

Blended, infinite murmurs of True Love's earliest song,
Where are you slumbering out of the heart that gave you
echoes so long?
But chords that have ceased to vibrate the swell of an an-
cient strain
May thrill with a soulful music when rightly touched again.

Rock and forest and meadow,—landscape perfect and true!
O, if ourselves were tender and all unchangeful as you,
I should not now be dreaming of seven years that have been,
Nor bidding old love good-by forever, and letting the new love in!

COUNTRY SLEIGHING

A NEW SONG TO AN OLD TUNE

In January, when down the dairy
The cream and clabber freeze,
When snow-drifts cover the fences over,
We farmers take our ease.
At night we rig the team,
And bring the cutter out;
Then fill it, fill it, fill it, fill it,
And heap the furs about.

Here friends and cousins dash up by dozens,
And sleighs at least a score;
There John and Molly, behind, are jolly,—
Nell rides with me, before.
All down the village street
We range us in a row:
Now jingle, jingle, jingle, jingle,
And over the crispy snow!

The windows glisten, the old folks listen
To hear the sleigh-bells pass;
The fields grow whiter, the stars are brighter,
The road is smooth as glass.
Our muffled faces burn,
The clear north-wind grows cold,
The girls all nestle, nestle, nestle,
Each in her lover's hold.

COUNTRY SLEIGHING

Through bridge and gateway we 're shooting straightway,
Their tollman was too slow!
He 'll listen after our song and laughter
As over the hill we go.
The girls cry, " Fie! for shame!"
Their cheeks and lips are red,
And so, with kisses, kisses, kisses,
They take the toll instead.

Still follow, follow! across the hollow
The tavern fronts the road.
Whoa, now! all steady! the host is ready, —
He knows the country mode!
The irons are in the fire,
The hissing flip is got;
So pour and sip it, sip it, sip it,
And sip it while 't is hot.

Push back the tables, and from the stables
Bring Tom, the fiddler, in;
All take your places, and make your graces,
And let the dance begin.
The girls are beating time
To hear the music sound;
Now foot it, foot it, foot it, foot it,
And swing your partners round.

Last couple toward the left! all forward!
Cotillons through, let 's wheel:
First tune the fiddle, then down the middle
In old Virginia Reel.
Play Money Musk to close,
Then take the " long chassé,"
While in to supper, supper, supper,
The landlord leads the way.

The bells are ringing, the ostlers bringing
The cutters up anew;
The beasts are neighing; too long we 're staying,
The night is half-way through.
Wrap close the buffalo-robes,
We 're all aboard once more;
Now jingle, jingle, jingle, jingle,
Away from the tavern-door.

So follow, follow, by hill and hollow,
And swiftly homeward glide.
What midnight splendor! how warm and tender
The maiden by your side!
The sleighs drop far apart,
Her words are soft and low;
Now, if you love her, love her, love her,
'T is safe to tell her so.

THE HEART OF NEW ENGLAND

O LONG are years of waiting, when lovers' hearts are bound
By words that hold in life and death, and last the half-world round;
Long, long for him who wanders far and strives with all his main,
But crueller yet for her who bides at home and hides her pain!
And lone are the homes of New England.

'T was in the mellow summer I heard her sweet reply;
The barefoot lads and lassies a-berrying went by;
The locust dinned amid the trees; the fields were high with corn;
The white-sailed clouds against the sky like ships were onward borne:
And blue are the skies of New England.

Her lips were like the raspberries; her cheek was soft and fair,
And little breezes stopped to lift the tangle of her hair;
A light was in her hazel eyes, and she was nothing loth
To hear the words her lover spoke, and pledged me there her troth;
And true is the word of New England.

When September brought the golden-rod, and maples burned like fire,
And bluer than in August rose the village smoke and higher,
And large and red among the stacks the ripened pumpkins shone,—
One hour, in which to say farewell, was left to us alone;
And sweet are the lanes of New England.

We loved each other truly! hard, hard it was to part;
But my ring was on her finger, and her hair lay next my heart.
"'T is but a year, my darling," I said; "in one short year,
When our Western home is ready, I shall seek my Katie here";
And brave is the hope of New England.

I went to gain a home for her, and in the Golden State
With head and hand I planned and toiled, and early worked and late;
But luck was all against me, and sickness on me lay,
And ere I got my strength again 't was many a weary day;
And long are the thoughts of New England.

And many a day, and many a month, and thrice the tolling year,
I bravely strove, and still the goal seemed never yet more near.

My Katie's letters told me that she kept her promise true,
But now, for very hopelessness, my own to her were few;
And stern is the pride of New England.

But still she trusted in me, though sick with hope deferred;
No more among the village choir her voice was sweetest heard;
For when the wild northeaster of the fourth long winter blew,
So thin her frame with pining, the cold wind pierced her through;
And chill are the blasts of New England.

At last my fortunes bettered, on the far Pacific shore,
And I thought to see old Windham and my patient love once more;
When a kinsman's letter reached me: "Come at once, or come too late!
Your Katie's strength is failing; if you love her, do not wait:
Come back to the elms of New England."

O, it wrung my heart with sorrow! I left all else behind,
And straight for dear New England I speeded like the wind.
The day and night were blended till I reached my boyhood's home,
And the old cliffs seemed to mock me that I had not sooner come;
And gray are the rocks of New England.

I could not think 't was Katie, who sat before me there
Reading her Bible — 't was my gift — and pillowed in her chair.
A ring, with all my letters, lay on a little stand, —
She could no longer wear it, so frail her poor, white hand!
But strong is the love of New England.

Her hair had lost its tangle and was parted off her brow;
She used to be a joyous girl,—but seemed an angel now,—
Heaven's darling, mine no longer; yet in her hazel eyes
The same dear love-light glistened, as she soothed my bitter cries:
And pure is the faith of New England.

A month I watched her dying, pale, pale as any rose
That drops its petals one by one and sweetens as it goes.
My life was darkened when at last her large eyes closed in death,
And I heard my own name whispered as she drew her parting breath;
Still, still was the heart of New England.

It was a woful funeral the coming sabbath-day;
We bore her to the barren hill on which the graveyard lay,
And when the narrow grave was filled, and what we might was done,
Of all the stricken group around I was the loneliest one;
And drear are the hills of New England.

I gazed upon the stunted pines, the bleak November sky,
And knew that buried deep with her my heart henceforth would lie;
And waking in the solemn nights my thoughts still thither go
To Katie, lying in her grave beneath the winter snow;
And cold are the snows of New England

THE LORD'S-DAY GALE

BAY ST. LAWRENCE, AUGUST, 1873

IN Gloucester port lie fishing craft,—
More stanch and trim were never seen:
They are sharp before and sheer abaft,
And true their lines the masts between.

Along the wharves of Gloucester Town
Their fares are lightly handed down,
And the laden flakes to landward lean.

Well know the men each cruising-ground,
And where the cod and mackerel be;
Old Eastern Point the schooners round
And leave Cape Ann on the larboard lee:
Sound are the planks, the hearts are bold,
That brave December's surges cold
On Georges' shoals in the outer sea.

And some must sail to the banks far north
And set their trawls for the hungry cod,—
In the ghostly fog grope back and forth
By shrouded paths no foot hath trod;
Upon the crews the ice-winds blow,
The bitter sleet, the frozen snow,—
Their lives are in the hand of God!

New England! New England!
Needs sail they must, so brave and poor,
Or June be warm or Winter storm,
Lest a wolf gnaw through the cottage-door!
Three weeks at home, three long months gone,
While the patient goodwives sleep alone,
And wake to hear the breakers roar.

The Grand Bank gathers in its dead,—
The deep sea-sand is their winding-sheet;
Who does not Georges' billows dread
That dash together the drifting fleet?
Who does not long to hear, in May,
The pleasant wash of Saint Lawrence Bay,
The fairest ground where fishermen meet?

There the west wave holds the red sunlight
Till the bells at home are rung for nine:

THE LORD'S-DAY GALE

Short, short the watch, and calm the night;
The fiery northern streamers shine;
The eastern sky anon is gold,
And winds from piny forests old
Scatter the white mists off the brine.

The Province craft with ours at morn
Are mingled when the vapors shift;
All day, by breeze and current borne,
Across the bay the sailors drift;
With toll and seine its wealth they win,—
The dappled, silvery spoil come in
Fast as their hands can haul and lift.

New England! New England!
Thou lovest well thine ocean main!
It spreadeth its locks among thy rocks,
And long against thy heart hath lain;
Thy ships upon its bosom ride
And feel the heaving of its tide;
To thee its secret speech is plain.

Cape Breton and Edward Isle between,
In strait and gulf the schooners lay;
The sea was all at peace, I ween,
The night before that August day;
Was never a Gloucester skipper there,
But thought erelong, with a right good fare,
To sail for home from Saint Lawrence Bay.

New England! New England!
Thy giant's love was turned to hate!
The winds control his fickle soul,
And in his wrath he hath no mate.
Thy shores his angry scourges tear,
And for thy children in his care
The sudden tempests lie in wait.

The East Wind gathered all unknown, —
A thick sea-cloud his course before;
He left by night the frozen zone
And smote the cliffs of Labrador;
He lashed the coasts on either hand,
And betwixt the Cape and Newfoundland
Into the Bay his armies pour.

He caught our helpless cruisers there
As a gray wolf harries the huddling fold;
A sleet — a darkness — filled the air,
A shuddering wave before it rolled:
That Lord's-day morn it was a breeze, —
At noon, a blast that shook the seas, —
At night, — a wind of Death took hold!

It leapt across the Breton bar,
A death-wind from the stormy East!
It scarred the land, and whirled afar
The sheltering thatch of man and beast;
It mingled rick and roof and tree,
And like a besom swept the sea,
And churned the waters into yeast.

From Saint Paul's light to Edward Isle
A thousand craft it smote amain;
And some against it strove the while,
And more to make a port were fain:
The mackerel-gulls flew screaming past,
And the stick that bent to the noonday blast
Was split by the sundown hurricane.

Woe, woe to those whom the islands pen!
In vain they shun the double capes:
Cruel are the reefs of Magdalen;
The Wolf's white fang what prey escapes?

THE LORD'S-DAY GALE

The Grin'stone grinds the bones of some,
And Coffin Isle is craped with foam; —
  On Deadman's shore are fearful shapes!

O, what can live on the open sea,
  Or moored in port the gale outride?
The very craft that at anchor be
  Are dragged along by the swollen tide!
The great storm-wave came rolling west,
And tossed the vessels on its crest:
  The ancient bounds its might defied!

The ebb to check it had no power;
  The surf ran up an untold height;
It rose, nor yielded, hour by hour,
  A night and day, a day and night;
Far up the seething shores it cast
The wrecks of hull and spar and mast,
  The strangled crews, — a woful sight!

There were twenty and more of Breton sail
  Fast anchored on one mooring-ground;
Each lay within his neighbor's hail
  When the thick of the tempest closed them round:
All sank at once in the gaping sea, —
Somewhere on the shoals their corses be,
  The foundered hulks, and the seamen drowned.

On reef and bar our schooners drove
  Before the wind, before the swell;
By the steep sand-cliffs their ribs were stove, —
  Long, long, their crews the tale shall tell!
Of the Gloucester fleet are wrecks threescore;
Of the Province sail two hundred more
  Were stranded in that tempest fell.

The bedtime bells in Gloucester Town
  That Sabbath night rang soft and clear;

The sailors' children laid them down, —
  Dear Lord! their sweet prayers couldst thou hear?
'T is said that gently blew the winds;
The goodwives, through the seaward blinds,
  Looked down the bay and had no fear.

New England! New England!
  Thy ports their dauntless seamen mourn;
The twin capes yearn for their return
  Who never shall be thither borne;
Their orphans whisper as they meet;
The homes are dark in many a street,
  And women move in weeds forlorn.

And wilt thou quail, and dost thou fear?
  Ah no! though widows' cheeks are pale,
The lads shall say: "Another year,
  And we shall be of age to sail!"
And the mothers' hearts shall fill with pride,
Though tears drop fast for them who died
  When the fleet was wrecked in the Lord's-Day gale.

WITCHCRAFT

I

A. D. 1692

Soe, Mistress Anne, faire neighbour myne,
  How rides a witche when nighte-winds blowe?
Folk saye that you are none too goode
To joyne the crewe in Salem woode,
When one you wot of gives the signe:
  Righte well, methinks, the pathe you knowe.

In Meetinge-time I watched you well,
  Whiles godly Master Parris prayed:

Your folded hands laye on your booke;
But Richard answered to a looke
That fain would tempt him unto hell,
  Where, Mistress Anne, your place is made.

You looke into my Richard's eyes
  With evill glances shamelesse growne;
I found about his wriste a hair,
And guesse what fingers tyed it there:
He shall not lightly be your prize —
  Your Master firste shall take his owne.

'T is not in nature he should be
  (Who loved me soe when Springe was greene)
A childe, to hange upon your gowne!
He loved me well in Salem Towne
Until this wanton witcherie
  His hearte and myne crept dark betweene.

Last Sabbath nighte, the gossips saye,
  Your goodman missed you from his side.
He had no strength to move, untill
Agen, as if in slumber still,
Beside him at the dawne you laye.
  Tell, nowe, what meanwhile did betide.

Dame Anne, mye hate goe with you fleete
  As driftes the Bay fogg overhead —
Or over yonder hill-topp, where
There is a tree ripe fruite shall bear
When, neighbour myne, your wicked feet
  The stones of Gallowes Hill shall tread.

II

A. D. 1884

Our great-great-grandpapas had schooled
  Your fancies, Lita, were you born
In days when Cotton Mather ruled
  And damask petticoats were worn!
Your pretty ways, your mocking air,
  Had passed, mayhap, for Satan's wiles—
As fraught with danger, then and there,
  To you, as now to us your smiles.

Why not? Were inquest to begin,
  The tokens are not far to seek:
Item — the dimple of your chin;
  Item — that freckle on your cheek.
Grace shield his simple soul from harm
  Who enters yon flirtation niche,
Or trusts in whispered counter-charm,
  Alone with such a parlous witch!

Your fan a wand is, in disguise;
  It conjures, and we straight are drawn
Within a witches' Paradise
  Of music, germans, roses, lawn.
So through the season, where you go,
  All else than Lita men forget:
One needs no second-sight to know
  That sorcery is rampant yet.

Now, since the bars no more await
  Fair maids that practise sable arts,
Take heed, while I pronounce the fate
  Of her who thus ensnares men's hearts:

COUSIN LUCRECE

In time you shall a wizard meet
  With spells more potent than your own,
And you shall know your master, Sweet,
  And for these witcheries atone.

For you at his behest shall wear
  A veil, and seek with him the church,
And at the altar rail forswear
  The craft that left you in the lurch;
But oft thereafter, musing long,
  With smile, and sigh, and conscience-twitch,
You shall too late confess the wrong —
  A captive and repentant witch.

1884.

COUSIN LUCRECE

HERE where the curfew
  Still, they say, rings,
Time rested long ago,
  Folding his wings;
Here, on old Norwich's
  Out-along road,
Cousin Lucretia
  Had her abode.

Norridge, not Nor-wich
  (See Mother Goose),
Good enough English
  For a song's use.
Side and roof shingled,
  All of a piece,
Here was the cottage
  Of Cousin Lucrece.

Living forlornly
  On nothing a year,

How she took comfort
Does not appear;
How kept her body,
On what they gave,
Out of the poor-house,
Out of the grave.

Highly connected?
Straight as the Nile
Down from "the Gard'ners"
Of Gardiner's Isle;
(Three bugles, chevron gules,
Hand upon sword),
Great-great-granddaughter
Of the third lord.

Bent almost double,
Deaf as a witch,
Gout her chief trouble —
Just as if rich;
Vain of her ancestry,
Mouth all agrin,
Nose half-way meeting her
Sky-pointed chin.

Ducking her forehead-top,
Wrinkled and bare,
With a colonial
Furbelowed air
Greeting her next of kin,
Nephew or niece, —
Foolish old, prating old
Cousin Lucrece.

Once every year she had
All she could eat:
Turkey and cranberries,
Pudding and sweet;

COUSIN LUCRECE

Every Thanksgiving,
  Up to the great
House of her kinsman, was
  Driven in state.

Oh, what a sight to see,
  Rigged in her best!
Wearing the famous gown
  Drawn from her chest,—
Worn, ere King George's reign
  Here chanced to cease,
Once by a forbear
  Of Cousin Lucrece.

Damask brocaded,
  Cut very low;
Short sleeves and finger-mitts
  Fit for a show;
Palsied neck shaking her
  Rust-yellow curls,
Rattling its roundabout
  String of mock pearls;

Over her noddle,
  Draggled and stark,
Two ostrich feathers—
  Brought from the ark.
Shoes of frayed satin,
  All heel and toe,
On her poor crippled feet
  Hobbled below.

My! how the Justice's
  Sons and their wives
Laughed; while the little folk
  Ran for their lives,

Asking if beldames
Out of the past,
Old fairy godmothers,
Always could last?

No! One Thanksgiving,
Bitterly cold,
After they took her home
(Ever so old),
In her great chair she sank,
There to find peace;
Died in her ancient dress —
Poor old Lucrece.

1892.

HUNTINGTON HOUSE

Ladies, Ladies Huntington, your father served, we know,
As aide-de-camp to Washington — you often told us so;
And when you sat you side by side in that ancestral pew,
We knew his ghost sat next the door, and very proud of you.

Ladies, Ladies Huntington, like you there are no more:
Nancy, Sarah, Emily, Louise, — proud maidens four;
Nancy tall and angular, Louise a rosy dear,
And Emily as fine as lace but just a little sere.

What was it, pray, your life within the mansion grand and old,
Four dormers in its gambrel-roof, their shingles grim with mould?
How dwelt you in your spinsterhood, ye ancient virgins lone,
From infancy to bag-and-muff so resolutely grown?

HUNTINGTON HOUSE

Each Sunday morning out you drove to Parson Arms's
church,
As straight as if Time had not left you somehow in the
lurch;
And so lived where your grandfather and father lived and
died,
Until you sought them one by one — and last of all stayed
pride.

You knew that with them you would lie in that old burial
ground
Wherethrough the name of Huntington on vault and stone
is found,
Where Norwichtown's first infant male, in sixteen-sixty
born,
Grave Christopher, still rests beneath his cherub carved
forlorn.

There sleep your warlike ancestors, their feet toward the
east,
And thus shall face the Judgment Throne when Gabriel's
blast hath ceased.
The frost of years may heave the tomb whereto you were
consigned,
And school-boys peer atween the cracks, but you — will
never mind.

1894.

POEMS OF OCCASION

ROUND THE OLD BOARD

VIGINTENNIAL DINNER, CLASS OF 1853

Air — "Cheer, Boys, Cheer!"

ROUND the old board once more we feast together!
Thrice and again our hearts have drawn us here;
Long have we sailed, in fair and stormy weather;
Here we are in port, though we 've voyaged many a year.
Each a tale can tell — like him of Homer's story,
Patient Ulysses upon the sounding main;
Some have gathered gold, and some have gotten glory:
Round the old board we sit and feast again!

CHORUS:

Yale, old Yale! the same old elms above us!
Comrades, are ye here, the mates that never fail?
Some have sought the skies, we know their spirits love us;
Some in far-off places are thinking of old Yale.

Twenty years syne! the shadow eastward passes;
Faster, every one, the seasons take their flight;
Though our time has come to sing *Eheu! fugaces*,
Round the old board we 'll not be sad to-night!
Twenty years syne, — when we were spruce and slender, —
Larger now our waistbands, alack and well-a-day!
Still in our hearts there 's something true and tender;
Boys we are to-night, though our heads are turning gray.

CHORUS: *Yale, old Yale, etc.*

Round the old board, with talk and song and laughter,
Each unto each shall gossip of his lot;
Here at Life's noon we look before and after;
Glad let us be, then, nor sigh for what is not.
Peace to the Dead! the spoiler has bereft us;
Dear are their names when the red wine is poured!
Drain we the cup to every comrade left us,
Near ones and far ones, round the old board.

CHORUS:

Yale, old Yale! the same old elms above us!
Comrades, are ye here, the mates that never fail?
Some have sought the skies, we know their spirits love us;
Some in far-off places are thinking of old Yale.

MERIDIAN

AN OLD-FASHIONED POEM

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YALE CLASS OF 1853

Inque brevi spatio mutantur sæcla animantum
Et quasi cursores vitai lampada tradunt.
LUCRETIUS, *De Rer. Nat.* Lib. ii.

I

THE tryst is kept. How fares it with each one
At this mid hour, when mariners take the sun
And cast their reckoning? when some level height
Is reached by men who set their strength aright,—
Who for a little space the firm plateau
Tread sure and steadfast, yet who needs must know
Full soon begins the inevitable slide
Down westward slopings of the steep divide.
How stands it, comrades, at this noontide fleet,
When for an hour we gather to the meet?

Like huntsmen, rallied by the winding horn,
Who seek the shade with trophies lightly borne,
Remembering their deeds of derring-do —
What bows were bent, what arrows speeded true.
All, all have striven, and far apart have strayed:
Fling down! fill up the can! wipe off the blade!
Ring out the song! nor care, in this our mood,
What hollow echo mocks us from the wood!

Or is it with us, haply, as with those
Each man of whom the morn's long combat knows?
All veterans now: the bugle's far recall
From the hot strife has sounded sweet to all.
Welcome the rendezvous beneath the elms,
The truce, the throwing down of swords and helms!

Life *is* a battle! How these sayings trite
Which school-boys write — and know not what they write —
In after years begin to burn and glow!
What man is here that has not found it so?
Who here is not a soldier of the wars,
Has not his half-healed wound, his early scars, —
Has broken not his sword, or from the field
Borne often naught but honor and his shield?
Ah, ye recruits, with flags and arms unstained,
See by what toil and moil the heights are gained!
Learn of our skirmish lost, our ridges won,
The dust, the thirst beneath the scorching sun;
Then see us closer draw — by fate bereft
Of men we loved — the firm-set column left.

II

To me the picture that some painter drew
Makes answer for our past. His throng pursue
A siren, one that ever smiles before,
Almost in reach, alluring more and more.

Old, young, with outstretched hand, with eager eye,
Fast follow where her wingèd sandals fly,
While by some witchery unto each she seems
His dearest hope, the spirit of his dreams.
Ah, me! how like those dupes of Pleasure's chase,
Yet how unlike, we left our starting-place!
Is there not something nobler, far more true,
In the Ideal, still before our view,
Upon whose shining course we followed far
While sank and rose the night and morning star?
Ever we saw a bright glance cast behind
Or heard a word of hope borne down the wind, —
As yet we see and hear, and follow still
With faithful hearts and long-enduring will.

In what weird circle has the enchantress led
Our footsteps, so that now again they tread
These walks, and all that on the course befell
Seems to ourselves a shadow and a spell?
Was it the magic of a moment's trance,
A scholar's day-dream? Have we been, perchance,
Like that bewildered king who dipped his face
In water — while a dervish paused to trace
A mystic phrase — and, ere he raised it, lived
A score of seasons, labored, journeyed, wived
In a strange city, — Tunis or Algiers, —
And, after what had seemed so many years,
Came to himself, and found all this had been
During the palace-clock's brief noonday din?

For here the same blithe robins seem to house
In the elm-forest, underneath whose boughs
We too were sheltered; nay, we cannot mark
The five-and-twenty rings, beneath the bark,
That tell the growth of some historic tree,
Since we, too, were a part of Arcady.
And in our trance, *negari*, should the bell

Speak out the hour, *non potest quin*, 't were well
The upper or the lower room to seek
For Tully's Latin, Homer's rhythmic Greek; —
Yet were it well? ay, brothers, if, alack,
For this one day the shadow might go back!

Ah, no! with doubtful faces each on each
We look, we speak with altered, graver speech:
The spell is gone! We know what 't is to wake
From an illusive dream, at morning's break,
That we again are dark-haired, buoyant, young, —
Scanning, once more, our spring-time mates among,
The grand hexameter — that anthem free
Of the pursuing, loud-resounding sea, —
To wake, anon, and know another day
Already speeds for one whose hairs are gray, —
In this swift change to lose a third of life
Lopped by the stroke of Memory's ruthless knife,
And feel, though naught go ill, it is a pain
That youth, lost youth, can never come again!

Were the dream real, or should we idly go
To yonder halls and strive to make it so,
There listening to the voices that rehearse,
Like ours of old, the swift Ionic verse,
What silvery speech could now for us restore
The cadence that we thought to hear once more?
The low, calm utterance of him who first
Our faltering minds to clearer knowledge nursed, —
The perfect teacher, who endured our raw
Harsh bleatings with a pang we never saw;
Whose bearing was so apt we scarcely knew,
At first, the wit that lit him through and through,
Strength's surplusage; nor, after many a day
Had taught us, rated well the heart that lay
Beneath his speech, nor guessed how brave a soul
In that frail body dwelt with fine control:

Alas, no longer dwells! Time's largest theft
Was that which learning and the world bereft
Of this pure scholar, — one who had been great
In every walk where led by choice or fate,
Were not his delicate yearnings still represt
Obeying duty's every-day behest.
He shrank from note, yet might have worn at ease
The garb whose counterfeit a sad world sees
Round many a dolt who gains, and deems it fame,
One tenth the honor due to HADLEY'S name.

Too soon the years, gray Time's relentless breed,
Have claimed our Pascal. He is theirs indeed;
Yet three remain of the ancestral mould,
Abreast, like them who kept the bridge of old:
The true, large-hearted man so many found
A helpful guardian, stalwart, sane, and sound;
And he, by sure selection upward led,
Whom now we reverence as becomes the Head, —
The sweet polemic, pointing shafts divine
With kindly satire, — latest of the line
That dates from godly Pierson. No less dear,
And more revered with each unruffled year,
That other Grecian: he who stands aside
Watching the streams that gather and divide.
Alcestis' love, the Titan's deathless will,
We read of in his text, and drank our fill
At Plato's spring. Now, from his sacred shade,
Still on the outer world his hand is laid
In use and counsel. Whom the nation saw
Most fit for Heaven could best expound Earth's law.

His wise, kind eyes behold — nor are they loth —
The larger scope, the quarter-century's growth:
How blooms the Mother with unwrinkled brow,
To whom her wandering sons, returning now,
Come not alone, but bring their sons to prove

That children's children have a share of love.
Through them she proffers us a second chance;
With their young eyes we see her hands advance
To crown the sports once banished from her sight;
With them we see old wrong become the right,
Tread pleasant halls, a healthy life behold
Less stinted than the cloister-range of old —
When the last hour of morning sleep was lost
And prayer was sanctified by dusk and frost,
And hungry tutors taught a class unfed
That a full stomach meant an empty head.
For them a tenth Muse, Beauty, here and there
Has touched the landmarks, making all more fair; —
We knew her not, save in our stolen dreams
Or stumbling song, but now her likeness gleams
Through chapel aisles, and in the house where Art
Has builded for her praise its shrines apart.

Now the new Knowledge, risen like a sun,
Makes bright for them the hidden ways that none
Revealed to us; or haply would dethrone
The gods of old, and rule these hearts alone
From yonder stronghold. By unnumbered strings
She draws our sons to her discoverings, —
Traces the secret paths of force, the heat
That makes the stout heart give its patient beat,
Follows the stars through æons far and free,
And shows what forms have been and are to be.

Such things are plain to these we hither brought,
More strange and varied than ourselves were taught;
But has the iris of the murmuring shell
A charm the less because we know full well
Sweet Nature's trick? Is Music's dying fall
Less finely blent with strains antiphonal
Because within a harp's quick vibratings
We count the tremor of the spirit's wings?

There is a path by Science yet untrod
Where with closed eyes we walk to find out God!
Still, still, the unattained ideal lures,
The spell evades, the splendor yet endures;
False sang the poet, — there is no good in rest,
And Truth still leads us to a deeper quest.

III

But Alma Mater, with her mother-eyes
Seeing us graver grown if not more wise, —
She calls us back, dear comrades — ah, how dear,
And dearer than when each to each was near!
Time thickens blood! Enough to know that one
Our classmate was and is, and is her son; —
She looks unto the East, the South, the West,
Asking, "Now who have kept my maxims best?
Who have most nearly held within their grasp
The fluttering robe that each essayed to clasp?"
Can ye not answer, brothers, even as I,
That still in front the vision seems to fly, —
More light and fleet her shining footsteps burn,
And speed the most when most she seems to turn?
And some have fallen, fallen from our band
Just as we thought to see them lay the hand
Upon her scarf: we know their precious names,
Their hearts, their work, their sorrows, and their fames.
Few gifts the brief years brought them, yet how few
Fell to the living as the lots we drew!
But some, who most were baffled, later found
Capricious Fortune's arms a moment wound
About them; some, who sought her on one side,
Beheld her reach them by a compass wide.
What then is Life? or what Success may be
Who, who can tell? who for another see?
From those, perchance, that closest seem to hold
Her love, her strength, her laurels, or her gold,

MERIDIAN

In this meridian hour she far has sped
And left them but her phantom mask instead.

A grave, sweet poet in a song has told
Of one, a king, who in his palace old
Hung up a bell; and placed its cord anear
His couch, — that thenceforth, when the court should hear
Its music, all might know the king had rung
With his own hand, and that its silver tongue
Gave out the words of joy he wished to say,
"I have been wholly happy on this day!"
Joy's full perfection never to him came;
Voiceless the bell, year after year the same,
Till, in his death-throes, round the cord his hand
Gathered — and there was mourning in the land.

I pray you, search the wistful past, and tell
Which of you all could ring the happy bell!
The treasure-trove, the gifts we ask of Fate,
Come far apart, come mildewed, come too late.
What says the legend? "All that man desires
Greatly at morn he gains ere day expires;"
But Age craves not the fruits that gladden Youth, —
It sits among its vineyards, full of ruth,
Finding the owner's right to what is best
Of little worth without the seeker's zest.

Yet something has been gained. Not all a waste
The light-winged years have vanished in their haste,
Howbeit their gift was scant of what we thought,
So much we thought not of they slowly wrought!
Not all a waste the insight and the zeal
We gathered here: these surely make for weal;
The current sets for him who swims upbuoyed
By the trained skill, with all his arts employed.

Coy Fortune may disdain our noblest cares,
The good she gives at last comes unawares : —
Long, long in vain, — with patience, worth, and love, —
To do her task the enchanted princess strove,
Till in the midnight pitying fairies crept
Unravelling the tangle while she slept.

This, then, the boon our Age of Wisdom brings, —
A knowledge of the real worth of things :
How poor, how good, is wealth ; how surely fame
And beauty must return to whence they came,
Yet not for this less beautiful and rare —
It is their evanescence makes them fair
And worth possession. Ours the age still strong
With passions, that demand not curb nor thong ;
And ours the age not old enough to set
Youth's joys above their proper worth, nor yet
So young as still to trust its empery more
Than unseen hands which lead to fortune's door.
For most have done the best they could, and all
The reign of law has compassed like a wall ;
Something accrued to each, and each has seen
A Power that works for good in life's demesne.
In our own time, to many a masquerade
The hour has come when masks aside were laid :
We 've seen the shams die out, the poor pretense
Cut off at last by truth's keen instruments,
The ignoble fashion wane and pass away, —
The fine return a second time, to stay, —
The knave, the quack, and all the meaner brood,
Go surely down, by the strong years subdued,
And, in the quarter-century's capping-race,
Strength, talent, honor, take and hold their place.
More glad, you say, the song I might have sung
In the free, careless days when all were young !
Now, long deferred, the sullen stroke of time
Has given a graver key, a deeper chime,

That the late singer of this strain might prove
Himself less keen for honors, more for love,
And in the music of your answer find
The charms that life to further action bind.
The Past is past; survey its course no more;
Henceforth our glasses sweep the further shore.
Five lustra, briefer than those gone, remain,
And then — a white-haired few shall meet again,
Lifting their heads that long have learned to droop,
And hear some sweeter minstrel of our group.
But stay! which one of us, alone, shall dine
At the Last Shadowy Banquet of the line?
Who knows? who does not in his heart reply,
"It matters not, so that it be not I."

YALE ODE FOR COMMENCEMENT DAY

I

HARK! through the archways old
High voices manifold
Sing praise to our fair Mother, praise to Yale!
The Muses' rustling garments trail;
White arms, with myrtle and with laurel wound,
Bring crowns to her, the Crowned!
Youngest and blithest, and awaited long,
The heavenly maid, sweet Music's child divine,
With golden lyre and joy of choric song
Leads all the Sisters Nine.

II

In the gray of a people's morn,
In the faith of the years to be,
The sacred Mother was born
On the shore of the fruitful sea;

By the shore she grew, and the ancient winds of the East
Made her brave and strong, and her beauteous youth increased
Till the winds of the West, from a wondrous land,
From the strand of the setting sun to the sea of her sunrise strand,
From fanes which her own dear hand hath planted in grove and mead and vale,
Breathe love from her countless sons of might to the Mother — breathe praise to Yale.

III

Mother of Learning! thou whose torch
Starward uplifts, afar its light to bear, —
Thine own revere thee throned within thy porch,
Rayed with thy shining hair.
The youngest know thee still more young, —
The stateliest, statelier yet than prophet-bard hath sung.
O mighty Mother, proudly set
Beside the far-inreaching sea,
None shall the trophied Past forget
Or doubt thy splendor yet to be!

1895.

MATER CORONATA

RECITED AT THE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF YALE UNIVERSITY, OCTOBER 23, 1901

I

ALL things on Earth that are accounted great
Are dedicate to conflict at first breath;
Nature herself knows grandly to await
The masterful estate
Which from her secret germ Time conjureth.

II

The elements that buffet man decree
His lustihood prevailing to the end;
The free air foreordains him to be free; —
Their stern persistency
The ages to his resolute spirit lend.

III

So rose our Academe since that far day
When reverently the grave forefathers came,
In council by the shoal ancestral bay,
To speak the word, — to pray, —
To found the enduring shrine without a name.

IV

Ye, at the witchery of whose golden wand
New cloisters rise to splendor in a night, —
Find here your model! Here the barriers stand
That were not made to hand,
That have the puissance Time confers aright.

V

Born with the exit of that iron age
When Nova Anglia to New-England grew,
Learning's new child put up a hermitage,
Whereof no godly mage
As from a mount the boundaries foreknew;

VI

No oracle betokened the obscure
Grim years encountering which the elders bowed,
Yet knew not faintness nor discomfiture,
But set the buttress sure
That should upstay these tabernacles proud;

VII

These fanes, that bred their patriot to vie
In steadfastness, erect of thought to live,
Or, when the country bade, undauntedly
Without lament to die
Save that he had but one young life to give.

VIII

Twice, thrice, and yet again, that sovereign call
Rang not in vain; nor from this ancient grove
Hath ceased to broaden, as the days befall,
The famed processional
Of the mind's workmen who to greatness move.

IX

No feebling she that reared them, no forlorn
And wrinkled mother lingering in the gray;
Fadeless she smiles to see her shield upborne:
It is her morn, her morn!
The past, but twilight ushering in her day.

X

Strong Mother! thou who from the doorways old,
Or housed anew in beauty renovate,
Hast spread thine heritage a hundred-fold, —
Hast wrought us to thy mould
Whether the bread of ease or toil we ate;

XI

Thou who hast made thy sons coequal all,
The least one of thy progeny a peer
Wearing for worth not birth his coronal, —
The watchmen on thy wall
Wax proud this sundawn of thy cyclic year!

XII

The lustres of a new-won firmament,
Spanned from the height thine upmost turrets crown,
Relume the course whereon thy thoughts are bent, —
Whereto the words are sent
That bid thy children pass the lineage down.

XIII

Ere yet that rainbowed dome thou seest complete,
Mankind, be sure, shall Earth more nobly share;
No churl his measure shall unduly mete;
And where are set thy feet
Life shall be counted lordlier and more fair.

XIV

Science shall yield new spells for man to know,
And bid thee consecrate to mortal weal
All that her henchmen in thy gates bestow;
Nor lofty then, nor low,
Save to his race each ministrant is leal.

XV

Thine be it still the undying antique speech,
The grove's high thought, the wing'd Hellenic lyre,
Unvexed of soul thy acolytes to teach, —
So shall they also reach
Their lamps, and light them at a quenchless fire;

XVI

And wield the trebly-welded English tongue,
Their vantage by inheritance divine,
Invincible the laurelled lists among
Wherein the bards have sung
Or sages deathless made the lettered line;

XVII

Till now, for that sure Pentecost to come,
The globe's four winds are winnowing apace
Fresh harvestings of speech, in one to sum
A world's curriculum
When East and West forgather face to face.

XVIII

Thus first imbued, thy coming host the clues
To broad achievement shall descry the more;
What thou hast taught them shall in statecraft use
Greatly; nor can they choose
But follow where the omens blaze before!

XIX

Even as our Platonist's exultant soul
That westward course of empire visioned far,
Now round the sheen, to Asia and the Pole,
Time charts upon our scroll
The empearlèd pathways of an orient star.

XX

There the swart Malay's juster league begun
Takes from our hands the tables of the law;
The mild Hawaiian raises to the sun
The folds himself had won
Ere the Antilles their deliverance saw.

XXI

Time's drama speeds: albeit, alas! its chief
Protagonist, augmenter of the State,
Fell as the Prompter turned that unread leaf, —
And oh, what tragic grief
Just when consummate towered the action great!

XXII

To strong brave hands the rule, the large intent,
Have passed. Nor tears alone that some far plan
Required the master's life-blood interblent —
To point his monument
And leave once more the likeness of a man.

XXIII

But we, Yale's living multitude rebrought
From farthest outposts of the pine and palm,—
We know her battlements of iron wrought,
Her captains fearing naught,
Her voice of welcome rising like a psalm.

XXIV

We know the still indissoluble chain
Wherewith the sons are to the Mother bound;
Nor unto any shall she call in vain
Who in her heart have lain
And trod the memoried precinct of her ground.

XXV

God dower her endowering her brood
With knowledge, beauty, valor, from her breast, —
Ingathering from the peopled town, the wood,
The island solitude,
The land's most loyal and its manfullest!

XXVI

God keep her! Yea, that Soul her soul endure, —
That Spirit of the interstellar void,
That mightier Presence than the fathers knew, —
The source of light wherethrough
Heaven's planets shine in joy and strength deployed.

XXVII

That Power, — even that which doth impart a share
And semblance of divinity to our kind, —
Hold thee, dear Mother, here and everywhere, —
Thee and thy sons, — in care,
Through centuries yet still loftier use to find!

DARTMOUTH ODE

I

PRELUDE

A WIND and a voice from the North!
A courier-wind sent forth
From the mountains to the sea:
A summons borne to me
From halls which the Muses haunt, from hills where the heart and the wind are free!

"Come from the outer throng!"
(Such was the burden it bore,)
"Thou who hast gone before,
Hither! and sing us a song,
Far from the round of the town and the sound of the great world's roar!"

O masterful voice of Youth,
That will have, like the upland wind, its own wild way!
O choral words, that with every season rise
Like the warblings of orchard-birds at break of day!
O faces, fresh with the light of morning skies!
No marvel world-worn toilers seek you here,
Even as they life renew, from year to year,
In woods and meadows lit with blossoming May;
But O, blithe voices, that have such sweet power,

Unto your high behest this summer hour
What answer has the poet? how shall he frame his lay?

II

THEME

"WHAT shall my song rehearse?" I said
To a wise bard, whose hoary head
Is bowed, like Kearsarge crouching low
Beneath a winter weight of snow,
But whose songs of passion, joy, or scorn,
Within a fiery heart are born.

"What can I spread, what proper feast
For these young Magi of the East?
What wisdom find, what mystic lore,
What chant they have not heard before?
Strange words of old has every tongue
Those happy cloistered hills among;
For each riddle I divine
They can answer me with nine;
Their footsteps by the Muse are led,
Their lips on Plato's honey fed;
Their eyes have skill to read the page
Of Theban bard or Attic sage;
For them all Nature's mysteries,—
The deep-down secrets of the seas,
The cyclone's whirl, the lightning's shock,
The language of the riven rock;
They know the starry sisters seven,—
What clouds the molten suns enfold,
And all the golden woof of heaven
Unravelled in their lens behold!
Gazing in a thousand eyes,
So rapt and clear, so wonder-wise,
What shall my language picture, then,
Beyond their wont — that has not reached their ken?

"What else are poets used to sing,
Who sing of youth, than laurelled fame and love?
But ah! it needs no words to move
Young hearts to some impassioned vow,
To whom already on the wing
The blind god hastens. Even now
Their pulses quiver with a thrill
Than all that wisdom wiser still.
Nor any need to tell of rustling bays,
Of honor ever at the victor's hand,
To them who at the portals stand
Like mettled steeds, — each eager from control
To leap, and, where the corso lies ablaze,
Let out his speed and soonest pass the goal.

"What is there left? what shall my verse
Within those ancient halls rehearse?"
Deep in his heart my plaint the minstrel weighed,
And a subtle answer made:
"The world that is, the ways of men,
Not yet are glassed within their ken.
Their foster-mother holds them long, —
Long, long to youth, — short, short to age, appear
The rounds of her Olympic Year, —
Their ears are quickened for the trumpet-call.
Sing to them one true song,
Ere from the Happy Vale they turn,
Of all the Abyssinian craved to learn,
And dared his fate, and scaled the mountain-wall
To join the ranks without, and meet what might befall."

III

VESTIGIA RETRORSUM

Gone the Arcadian age,
When, from his hillside hermitage

Sent forth, the gentle scholar strode
At ease upon a royal road,
And found the outer regions all they seem
In Youth's prophetic dream.
The graduate took his station then
By right, a ruler among men:
Courtly the three estates, and sure;
The bar, the bench, the pulpit, pure;
No cosmic doubts arose, to vex
The preacher's heart, his faith perplex.
Content in ancient paths he trod,
Nor searched beyond his Book for God.
Great virtue lurked in many a saw
And in the doctor's Latin lay;
Men thought, lived, died, in the appointed way.
Yet eloquence was slave to law,
And law to right: the statesman sought
A patriot's fame, and served his land, unbought,
And bore erect his front, and held his oath in awe.

IV

ÆREA PROLES

But, now, far other days
Have made less green the poet's bays, —
Have less revered the band and gown,
The grave physician's learnèd frown, —
Shaken the penitential mind
That read the text nor looked behind, —
Brought from his throne the bookman down,
Made hard the road to station and renown!
Now from this seclusion deep
The scholar wakes, — as one from sleep,
As one from sleep remote and sweet,
In some fragrant garden-close
Between the lily and the rose,
Roused by the tramp of many feet,

Leaps up to find a ruthless, warring band,
Dust, strife, an untried weapon in his hand!
The time unto itself is strange,
Driven on from change to change,
Neither of past nor present sure,
The ideal vanished nor the real secure.
Heaven has faded from the skies,
Faith hides apart and weeps with clouded eyes;
A noise of cries we hear, a noise of creeds,
While the old heroic deeds
Not of the leaders now are told, as then,
But of lowly, common men.
See by what paths the loud-voiced gain
Their little heights above the plain:
Truth, honor, virtue, cast away
For the poor plaudits of a day!
Now fashion guides at will
The artist's brush, the writer's quill,
While, for a weary time unknown,
The reverent workman toils alone,
Asking for bread and given but a stone.
Fettered with gold the statesman's tongue;
Now, even the church, among
New doubts and strange discoveries, half in vain
Defends her long, ancestral reign;
Now, than all others grown more great,
That which was the last estate
By turns reflects and rules the age, —
Laughs, scolds, weeps, counsels, jeers, — a jester and sage!

V

ENCHANTMENTS

HERE in Learning's shaded haunt,
The battle-fugue and mingled cries forlorn
Softened to music seem, nor the clear spirit daunt;

Here, in the gracious world that looks
From earth and sky and books,
Easeful and sweet it seems all else to scorn
Than works of noble use and virtue born;
Brave hope and high ambition consecrate
Our coming years to something great.
But when the man has stood,
Anon, in garish outer light,
Feeling the first wild fever of the blood
That places self with self at strife
Whether to hoard or drain the wine of life, —
When the broad pageant flares upon the sight,
And tuneful Pleasure plumes her wing
And the crowds jostle and the mad bells ring, —
Then he, who sees the vain world take slow heed
Albeit of his worthiest and best,
And still, through years of failure and unrest,
Would keep inviolate his vow,
Of all his faith and valor has sore need!
Even then, I know, do nobly as we will,
What we would not, we do, and see not how;
That which we would, is not, we know not why;
Some fortune holds us from our purpose still, —
Chance sternly beats us back, and turns our steps awry!

VI

YOUTH AND AGE

How slow, how sure, how swift,
The sands within each glass,
The brief, illusive moments, pass!
Half unawares we mark their drift
Till the awakened heart cries out, — Alas!
Alas, the fair occasion fled,
The precious chance to action all unwed!
And murmurs in its depths the old refrain, —
Had we but known betimes what now we know in vain!

When the veil from the eyes is lifted
The seer's head is gray;
When the sailor to shore has drifted
The sirens are far away.
Why must the clearer vision,
The wisdom of Life's late hour,
Come, as in Fate's derision,
When the hand has lost its power?
Is there a rarer being,
Is there a fairer sphere
Where the strong are not unseeing,
And the harvests are not sere;
Where, ere the season's dwindle
They yield their due return;
Where the lamps of knowledge kindle
While the flames of youth still burn?
O for the young man's chances!
O for the old man's will!
Those flee while this advances,
And the strong years cheat us still.

VII

WHAT CHEER?

Is there naught else? — you say, —
No braver prospect far away?
No gladder song, no ringing call
Beyond the misty mountain-wall?
And were it thus indeed, I know
Your hearts would still with courage glow;
I know how yon historic stream
Is laden yet, as in the past,
With dreamful longings on it cast,
By those who saunter from the crown
Of this broad slope, their reverend Academe, —
Who reach the meadowed banks, and lay them down
On the green sward, and set their faces south,

Embarked in Fancy's shallop there,
And with the current seek the river's mouth,
Finding the outer ocean grand and fair.
Ay, like a stream's perpetual tide,
Wave after wave each blithe, successive throng
Must join the main and wander far and wide.
To you the golden, vanward years belong!
Ye need not fear to leave the shore:
Not seldom youth has shamed the sage
With riper wisdom, — but to age
Youth, youth, returns no more!
Be yours the strength by will to conquer fate,
Since to the man who sees his purpose clear,
And gains that knowledge of his sphere
Within which lies all happiness, —
Without, all danger and distress, —
And seeks the right, content to strive and wait,
To him all good things flow, nor honor crowns him late.

VIII

PHAROS

One such there was, that brother elder-born
And loftiest, — from your household torn
In the rathe spring-time, ere
His steps could seek their olden pathways here.
Mourn!
Mourn, for your Mother mourns, of him bereft, —
Her strong one! he is fallen:
But has left
His works your heritage and guide,
Through East and West his stalwart fame divide.
Mourn, for the liberal youth,
The undaunted spirit whose quintessence rare,
Fanned by the Norseland air,
Saw flaming in its own white heat the truth
That Man, whate'er his ancestry,

Tanned by what sun or exiled from what shore,
Hears in his soul the high command, — Be Free!
For him who, at the parting of the ways,
Disdained the flowery path, and gave
His succor to the hunted Afric slave,
Whose cause he chose nor feared the world's dispraise;
Yet found anon the right become the might,
And, in the long revenge of time,
Lived to renown and hoary years sublime.
Ye know him now, your beacon-light!
Ay, he was fronted like a tower, —
In thought large-moulded, as of frame;
He that, in the supreme hour,
Sat brooding at the river-heads of power
With sovereign strength for every need that came!
Not for that blameless one the place
That opens wide to men of lesser race; —
Even as of old the votes are given,
And Aristides is from Athens driven;
But for our statesmen, in his grander trust
No less the undefiled, The Just, —
With poesy and learning lightly worn,
And knees that bent to Heaven night and morn, —
For him that sacred, unimpassioned seat,
Where right and wrong for stainless judgment meet
Above the greed, the strife, the party call. —
Henceforth let CHASE's robes on no base shoulders fall!

IX

ATLANTIS SURGENS

WELL may your hearts be valiant, — ye who stand
Within that glory from the past,
And see how ripe the time, how fair the land
In which your lot is cast!
For us alone your sorrow,
Ye children of the morrow, —

For us, who struggle yet, and wait,
Sent forth too early and too late!
But yours shall be our tenure handed down,
Conveyed in blood, stamped with the martyr's crown;
For which the toilers long have wrought,
And poets sung, and heroes fought;
The new Saturnian age is yours,
That juster season soon to be
On the near coasts (whereto your vessels sail
Beyond the darkness and the gale),
Of proud Atlantis risen from the sea!
You shall not know the pain that now endures
The surge, the smiting of the waves,
The overhanging thunder,
The shades of night which plunge engulfèd under
Those yawning island-caves;
But in their stead for you shall glisten soon
The coral circlet and the still lagoon,
Green shores of freedom, blest with calms,
And sunlit streams and meads, and shadowy palms:
Such joys await you, in our sorrows' stead;
Thither our charts have almost led;
Nor in that land shall worth, truth, courage, ask for alms.

X

VALETE ET SALVETE

O, TRAINED beneath the Northern Star!
Worth, courage, honor, these indeed
Your sustenance and birthright are!
Now, from her sweet dominion freed,
Your Foster Mother bids you speed;
Her gracious hands the gates unbar,
Her richest gifts you bear away,
Her memories shall be your stay:
Go where you will, her eyes your course shall mark afar.

June 25, 1873.

THE OLD ADMIRAL

Gone at last,
That brave old hero of the Past!
His spirit has a second birth,
An unknown, grander life; —
All of him that was earth
Lies mute and cold,
Like a wrinkled sheath and old
Thrown off forever from the shimmering blade
That has good entrance made
Upon some distant, glorious strife.

From another generation,
A simpler age, to ours Old Ironsides came;
The morn and noontide of the nation
Alike he knew, nor yet outlived his fame, —
O, not outlived his fame!
The dauntless men whose service guards our shore
Lengthen still their glory-roll
With his name to lead the scroll,
As a flagship at her fore
Carries the Union, with its azure and the stars,
Symbol of times that are no more
And the old heroic wars.

He was the one
Whom Death had spared alone
Of all the captains of that lusty age,
Who sought the foeman where he lay,
On sea or sheltering bay,
Nor till the prize was theirs repressed their rage.
They are gone, — all gone:
They rest with glory and the undying Powers;
Only their name and fame and what they saved are ours!

THE OLD ADMIRAL

It was fifty years ago,
  Upon the Gallic Sea,
  He bore the banner of the free,
And fought the fight whereof our children know.
  The deathful, desperate fight! —
  Under the fair moon's light
The frigate squared, and yawed to left and right.
  Every broadside swept to death a score!
Roundly played her guns and well, till their fiery ensigns
      fell,
  Neither foe replying more.

All in silence, when the night-breeze cleared the air,
  Old Ironsides rested there,
Locked in between the twain, and drenched with blood.
  Then homeward, like an eagle with her prey!
  O, it was a gallant fray,
  That fight in Biscay Bay!
Fearless the Captain stood, in his youthful hardihood;
  He was the boldest of them all,
  Our brave old Admiral!

And still our heroes bleed,
Taught by that olden deed.
  Whether of iron or of oak
The ships we marshal at our country's need,
  Still speak their cannon now as then they spoke;
Still floats our unstruck banner from the mast
  As in the stormy Past.

Lay him in the ground:
  Let him rest where the ancient river rolls;
Let him sleep beneath the shadow and the sound
  Of the bell whose proclamation, as it tolls,
Is of Freedom and the gift our fathers gave.
  Lay him gently down:
  The clamor of the town

Will not break the slumbers deep, the beautiful ripe sleep
Of this lion of the wave,
Will not trouble the old Admiral in his grave.

Earth to earth his dust is laid.
Methinks his stately shade
On the shadow of a great ship leaves the shore;
Over cloudless western seas
Seeks the far Hesperides,
The islands of the blest,
Where no turbulent billows roar, —
Where is rest.
His ghost upon the shadowy quarter stands
Nearing the deathless lands.
There all his martial mates, renewed and strong,
Await his coming long.
I see the happy Heroes rise
With gratulation in their eyes:
"Welcome, old comrade," Lawrence cries;
"Ah, Stewart, tell us of the wars!
Who win the glory and the scars?
How floats the skyey flag, — how many stars?
Still speak they of Decatur's name,
Of Bainbridge's and Perry's fame?
Of me, who earliest came?
Make ready, all:
Room for the Admiral!
Come, Stewart, tell us of the wars!"

November 22, 1869.

HORACE GREELEY

EARTH, let thy softest mantle rest
On this worn child to thee returning,
Whose youth was nurtured at thy breast,
Who loved thee with such tender yearning!

HORACE GREELEY

He knew thy fields and woodland ways,
And deemed thy humblest son his brother: —
Asleep, beyond our blame, or praise,
We yield him back, O gentle Mother!

Of praise, of blame he drank his fill:
Who has not read the life-long story?
And dear we hold his fame, but still
The man was dearer than his glory.
And now to us are left alone
The closet where his shadow lingers,
The vacant chair, — that was a throne, —
The pen, just fallen from his fingers.

Wrath changed to kindness on that pen;
Though dipped in gall, it flowed with honey;
One flash from out the cloud, and then
The skies with smile and jest were sunny.
Of hate he surely lacked the art,
Who made his enemy his lover:
O reverend head and Christian heart!
Where now their like the round world over?

He saw the goodness, not the taint,
In many a poor, do-nothing creature,
And gave to sinner and to saint,
But kept his faith in human nature;
Perchance he was not worldly-wise,
Yet we who noted, standing nearer,
The shrewd, kind twinkle in his eyes,
For every weakness held him dearer.

Alas that unto him who gave
So much, so little should be given!
Himself alone he might not save
Of all for whom his hands had striven.
Place, freedom, fame, his work bestowed:
Men took, and passed, and left him lonely; —

What marvel if, beneath his load,
At times he craved — for justice only!

Yet thanklessness, the serpent's tooth,
His lofty purpose could not alter;
Toil had no power to bend his youth,
Or make his lusty manhood falter;
From envy's sling, from slander's dart,
That armored soul the body shielded,
Till one dark sorrow chilled his heart,
And then he bowed his head and yielded.

Now, now, we measure at its worth
The gracious presence gone forever!
The wrinkled East, that gave him birth,
Laments with every laboring river;
Wild moan the free winds of the West
For him who gathered to her prairies
The sons of men, and made each crest
The haunt of happy household fairies;

And anguish sits upon the mouth
Of her who came to know him latest:
His heart was ever thine, O South!
He was thy truest friend, and greatest!
He shunned thee in thy splendid shame,
He stayed thee in thy voiceless sorrow;
The day thou shalt forget his name,
Fair South, can have no sadder morrow.

The tears that fall from eyes unused, —
The hands above his grave united, —
The words of men whose lips he loosed,
Whose cross he bore, whose wrongs he righted, —
Could he but know, and rest with this!
Yet stay, through Death's low-lying hollow,

THE MONUMENT OF GREELEY

His one last foe's insatiate hiss
On that benignant shade would follow!

Peace! while we shroud this man of men
Let no unhallowed word be spoken!
He will not answer thee again,
His mouth is sealed, his wand is broken.
Some holier cause, some vaster trust
Beyond the veil, he doth inherit:
O gently, Earth, receive his dust,
And Heaven soothe his troubled spirit!

December 3, 1872.

THE MONUMENT OF GREELEY

READ AT THE UNVEILING OF THE BUST SURMOUNTING THE PRINTERS' MONUMENT TO HORACE GREELEY, GREENWOOD CEMETERY, DECEMBER 4, 1876

ONCE more, dear mother Earth, we stand
In reverence where thy bounty gave
Our brother, yielded to thy hand,
The sweet protection of the grave!
Well hast thou soothed him through the years,
The years our love and sorrow number,—
And with thy smiles, and with thy tears,
Made green and fair his place of slumber.

Thine be the keeping of that trust;
And ours this image, born of Art
To shine above his hidden dust,
What time the sunrise breezes part
The trees, and with new life enwreathe
Yon head,—until the lips are golden,
And from them music seems to breathe
As from the desert statue olden.

Would it were so! that now we might
  Hear once his uttered voice again,
Or hold him present to our sight,
  Nor reach with empty hands and vain!
O that, from some far place, were heard
  One cadence of his speech returning, —
A whispered tone, a single word,
  Sent back in answer to our yearning!

It may not be? What then the spark,
  The essence which illumed the whole
And made his living form its mark
  And outward likeness? What the soul
That warmed the heart and poised the head,
  And spoke the thoughts we now inherit?
Bright force of fire and ether bred, —
  Where art thou now, elusive Spirit?

Where, now, the sunburst of a love
  Which blended still with sudden wrath
To nerve the righteous hand that strove,
  And blaze in the oppressor's path?
Fair Earth, our dust is thine indeed!
  Too soon he reached the voiceless portal, —
That whither leads? Where lies the mead
  He gained, and knew himself immortal?

Or, tell us, on what distant star,
  Where even as here are toil and wrong,
With strength renewed he lifts afar
  A voice of aid, a war-cry strong?
What fruit, this stern Olympiad past,
  Has that rich nature elsewhere yielded,
What conquest gained and knowledge vast,
What kindred beings loved and shielded!

THE MONUMENT OF GREELEY

Why seek to know? he little sought,
Himself, to lift the close-drawn veil,
Nor for his own salvation wrought
And pleaded, ay, and wore his mail;
No selfish grasp of life, no fear,
Won for mankind his ceaseless caring,
But for themselves he held them dear,—
Their birth and shrouded exit sharing.

Not his the feverish will to live
A sunnier life, a longer space,
Save that the Eternal Law might give
The boon in common to his race.
Earth, 't was thy heaven he loved, and best
Thy precious offspring, man and woman,
And labor for them seemed but rest
To him, whose nature was so human.

Even here his spirit haply longed
To stay, remembered by our kind,
And where the haunts of men are thronged
Move yet among them. Seek and find
A presence, though his voice has ceased,
Still, even where we dwell, remaining,
With all its tenderest thrills increased
And all it cared to ask obtaining.

List, how the varied things that took
The impress of his passion rare
Make answer! To the roadways look,
The watered vales, the hamlets fair.
He walks unseen the living woods,
The fields, the town, the shaded borough,
And in the pastoral solitudes
Delights to view the lengthening furrow.

The faithful East that cradled him,
Still, while she deems her nurseling sleeps,
Sits by his couch with vision dim;
The plenteous West his feast-day keeps;
The wistful South recalls the ways
Of one who in his love enwound her,
And stayed her, in the evil days,
With arms of comfort thrown around her.

He lives wherever men to men
In perilous hours his words repeat,
Where clangs the forge, where glides the pen,
Where toil and traffic crowd the street;
And in whatever time or place
Earth's purest souls their purpose strengthen,
Down the broad pathway of his race
The shadow of his name shall lengthen.

"Still with us!" all the liegemen cry
Who read his heart and held him dear;
The hills declare "He shall not die!"
The prairies answer "He is here!"
Immortal thus, no dread of fate
Be ours, no vain *memento mori:*
Life, Life, not Death, we celebrate, —
A lasting presence touched with glory.

The star may vanish, — but a ray,
Sent forth, what mandate can recall?
The circling wave still keeps its way
That marked a turret's seaward fall;
The least of music's uttered strains
Is part of Nature's voice forever;
And aye beyond the grave remains
The great, the good man's high endeavor!

THE MONUMENT OF GREELEY

Well may the brooding Earth retake
The form we knew, to be a part
Of bloom and herbage, fern and brake,
New lives that from her being start.
Naught of the soul shall there remain:
They came on void and darkness solely
Who the veiled Spirit sought in vain
Within the temple's shrine Most Holy.

That, that, has found again the source
From which itself to us was lent:
The Power that, in perpetual course,
Makes of the dust an instrument
Supreme; the universal Soul;
The current infinite and single
Wherein, as ages onward roll,
Life, Thought, and Will forever mingle.

What more is left, to keep *our* hold
On him who was so true and strong?
This semblance, raised above the mould
With offerings of word and song,
That men may teach, in aftertime,
Their sons how goodness marked the features
Of one whose life was made sublime
By service for his brother creatures.

And last, and lordliest, his fame,—
A station in the sacred line
Of heroes that have left a name
We conjure with,—a place divine,
Since, in the world's eternal plan,
Divinity itself is given,
To him who lives or dies for Man
And looks within his soul for Heaven.

CUSTER

WHAT! shall that sudden blade
Leap out no more?
No more thy hand be laid
Upon the sword-hilt, smiting sore?
O for another such
The charger's rein to clutch,—
One equal voice to summon victory,
Sounding thy battle-cry,
Brave darling of the soldiers' choice!
Would there were one more voice!

O gallant charge, too bold!
O fierce, imperious greed
To pierce the clouds that in their darkness hold
Slaughter of man and steed!
Now, stark and cold,
Among thy fallen braves thou liest,
And even with thy blood defiest
The wolfish foe:
But ah, thou liest low,
And all our birthday song is hushed indeed!

Young lion of the plain,
Thou of the tawny mane!
Hotly the soldiers' heart shall beat,
Their mouths thy death repeat,
Their vengeance seek the trail again
Where thy red doomsmen be;
But on the charge no more shall stream
Thy hair,— no more thy sabre gleam,—
No more ring out thy battle-shout,
Thy cry of victory!

CORDA CONCORDIA

Not when a hero falls
The sound a world appalls:
For while we plant his cross
There is a glory, even in the loss:
But when some craven heart
From honor dares to part,
Then, then, the groan, the blanching cheek,
And men in whispers speak,
Nor kith nor country dare reclaim
From the black depths his name.

Thou, wild young warrior, rest,
By all the prairie winds caressed!
Swift was thy dying pang;
Even as the war-cry rang
Thy deathless spirit mounted high
And sought Columbia's sky:—
There, to the northward far,
Shines a new star,
And from it blazes down
The light of thy renown!

July 10, 1876.

CORDA CONCORDIA

Read at the Opening Session of the Summer School of Philosophy, Concord, July 11, 1881

No sandalled footsteps fall,
Tablet and coronal
From the Cephissian grove have vanished long,
Yet in the sacred dale
Still bides the nightingale
Easing his ancient heart-break still with song;
Or is there some dim audience
Viewless to all save his unclouded sense?

Revisit now those glades
The stately mantled shades
Whose lips so wear the inexorable spell?
Saying, with heads sunk low,
All that we sought, we know, —
We know, but not to mortal ears may tell:
No answer unto man's desire
Shall thus be made, to quench his eager fire.

Under these orchard trees
Still pure and fresh the breeze
As where the plane-tree whispered to the elm;[1]
The thrush and robin bring
A new-world offering
Of song, — nor are we banished from the realm
Of thought that as the wind is pure,
And converse deep, and memories that endure.

Some honey dropped as well,
Some dew of hydromel
From wilding meadow-bees, upon the lips
Of poet and sage who found,
Here on our own dear ground,
Light as of old; who let no dull eclipse
Obscure this modern sky, where first
Through perilous clouds the dawn of freedom burst.

Within this leafy haunt
Their service ministrant
Upheld the nobler freedom of the soul.
How was it hither came
The message and the flame
Anew? Make answer from thine aureole,
O mother Nature, thou who best
Man's heart in all thy ways interpretest!

[1] Aristophanes, *Nubes*, 995.

High thoughts of thee brought near
Unto our minstrel-seer
The antique calm, the Asian wisdom old,
Till in his verse we heard
Of blossom, bee, and bird,
Of mountain crag and pine, the manifold
Rich song, — and on the world his eyes
Dwelt penetrant with vision sweet and wise.

Whence came the silver tongue
To one forever young
Who spoke until our hearts within us burned?
This reverend one, who took
No palimpsest or book,
But read his soul with glances inward turned,
While (her rapt forehead like the dawn)
The Sibyl listened, by that music drawn,

And from her fearless mouth,
Where never speech had drouth,
Gave voice to some old chant of womanhood, —
Her own imaginings,
Like swift, resplendent things,
Flashing from eyes that knew to beam or brood.
What sought these shining ones? What thought
From preacher-saint have poet and teacher caught?

In scorn of meaner use,
Anon, the young recluse
Builded his hut beside the woodland lake,
And set the world far off,
Though with no will to scoff,
Thus from the Earth's near breast fresh life to take.
Against her bosom, heart to heart,
All Nature's sweets he ravished for his Art.

The soul's fine instrument,
Of pains and raptures blent,
Replied to these clear voices, tone for tone,
Their cadence answering
With tuneful sounds that wing
The upper air a few perchance have known,
The stormless empyrean, where
In strength and joy a few move unaware.

Ah, even thus the thrill
Of life beyond life's ill
To feel betimes our envious selves are fain, —
Seeing that, as birds in night
Wind-driven against the light
Whose unseen armor mocks their stress and pain,
Most men fall baffled in the surge
That to their cry responds but with a dirge.

Where broods the Absolute,
Or shuns our long pursuit
By fiery utmost pathways out of ken?
Fleeter than sunbeams, lo,
Our passionate spirits go,
And traverse immemorial space, and then
Look off, and look in vain, to find
The master-clew to all they left behind.

White orbs like angels pass
Before the triple glass,
That men may scan the record of each flame, —
Of spectral line and line
The legendry divine, —
Finding their mould the same, and aye the same,
The atoms that we knew before
Of which ourselves are made, — dust, and no more.

So let our defter art
Probe the warm brain, and part
Each convolution of the trembling shell:
But whither now has fled
The sense to matter wed
That murmured here? All silence, such as fell
When to the shrine beyond the Ark
The soldiers reached, and found it void and dark.

Seek elsewhere, and in vain
The wings of morning chain;
Their speed transmute to fire, and bring the Light,
The co-eternal beam
Of the blind minstrel's dream;
But think not that bright heat to know aright,
Nor how the trodden seed takes root,
Waked by its glow, and climbs to flower and fruit.

Behind each captured law
Weird shadows give us awe;
Press with your swords, the phantoms still evade;
Through our alertest host
Wanders at ease some ghost,
Now here, now there, by no enchantment laid,
And works upon our souls its will,
Leading us on to subtler mazes still.

We think, we feel, we are;
And light, as of a star,
Gropes through the mist, — a little light is given;
And aye from life and death
We strive, with indrawn breath,
To somehow wrest the truth, and long have striven,
Nor pause, though book and star and clod
Reply, *Canst thou by searching find out God?*

As from the hollow deep
The soul's strong tide must keep
Its purpose still. We rest not, though we hear
No voice from heaven let fall,
No chant antiphonal
Sounding through sunlit clefts that open near;
We look not outward, but within,
And think not quite to end as we begin.

For now the questioning age
Cries to each hermitage,
Cease not to ask, — or bring again the time
When the young world's belief
Made light the mourner's grief
And strong the sage's word, the poet's rhyme, —
Ere Knowledge thrust a spear-head through
The temple's veil that priest so closely drew.

From what our fate inurns —
Save that which music yearns
To speak, in ecstasy none understand,
And (Oh, how like to it!)
The half-formed rays that flit,
Like memories vague, above the further land —
Cry, as the star-led Magi cried,
We seek, we seek, we will not be denied!

Let the blind throng await
A healer at the gate;
Our hearts press on to see what yonder lies,
Knowing that arch on arch
Shall loom across the march
And over portals gained new strongholds rise.
The search itself a glory brings,
Though foiled so oft, that seeks the soul of things.

Some brave discovery,
Howbeit in vain we try
To clutch the shape that lures us evermore,
It shall be ours to make, —
As, where the waters break
Upon the margin of a pathless shore,
They find, who sought for gold alone,
The sudden wonders of a clime unknown.

Such treasure by the way
Your errantry shall pay,
Nor shall it aught against your hope prevail
That not to waking eyes
The golden clouds arise
Wherewith our visions clothe the mystic Grail,
When, in blithe halts upon the road,
We sleep where pilgrims earlier gone abode.

After the twelvemonth set
When as of old they met,
(A twelvemonth and a day, and kept their tryst,)
And knight to pilgrim told
Things given them to behold,
What country found, what gained of all they wist,
(While ministering hands assign
To each a share of healing food and wine,)

So come, — when long grass waves
Above the holiest graves
Of them whose ripe adventure chides our own, —
Come where the great elms lean
Their quivering leaves and green
To shade the moss-clung roofs now sacred grown,
And where the bronze and granite tell
How Liberty was hailed with Life's farewell.

Here let your Academe
Be no ignoble dream,
But, consecrate with life and death and song,
Through the land's spaces spread
The trust inherited,
The hope which from your hands shall take no wrong,
And build an altar that may last
Till heads now young be laurelled with the Past.

"UBI SUNT QUI ANTE NOS?"

READ AT THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL MEETING OF THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION, JANUARY 13, 1897

How now are the Others faring? Where sit They all in state?
And is there a token that somewhere, beyond the muffled gate,
The vanished and unreturning, whose names our memories fill,
Are holding their upper conclave and are of the Century still?

Is it all a fancy that somewhere, that somehow, the mindful Dead,
From the first that made his exit to the latest kinsman sped,—
Their vision ourselves unnoting, their shapes by ourselves unseen,—
Have gathered like us, together this night in that strange demesne?

That the astral world's telepathy along their aisles of light
Has summoned our brave immortals, this selfsame mortal night,
All in that rare existence where thoughts a substance are,
To their native planet's aura, from journeyings near and far;

And that now with forms made over, and life as jocund and young
As when they here kept wassail and joined in the catches sung,
They have met in the ancient fashion, and now in the old-time speech
Are chanting their Vivat Centuria just out of our hearing's reach?

Yes, O yes, — as the pictured ghosts of Huns war on in middle air
With a fiercer battle-hunger from the field upflinging there, —
And since the things we have chosen from all, as most of worth
Forever here and hereafter, cease not with the end of Earth;

Since joy and knowledge and beauty, and the love of man to man
Passing the love of women, the links of our chain began, —
Yea, even as these are ceaseless, so they who were liegemen here
Hark back and are all Centurions this night of the fiftieth year!

Yes, the draftsmen and craftsmen have fashioned with a dream's compelling force
The Century's lordlier temple, have builded it course on course,
And a luminiferous ether floods the great assembly-hall
Where the scintillant "C. A." colophon burns high in the sight of all.

The painters have hung from end to end cloud-canvases ablaze
With that color-scheme from us hidden in the ultra-violet rays,

With the new chiaroscuro of things that each way face,
And the in-and-out perspective of their four-dimensioned space.

O, to hear the famed Cantators upraise the mighty chant,
With their bass transposed to the tumbling depth below our octaves scant,
And a tenor of those Elysian notes "too fine for mortal ear,"
Yet tuned to the diapason of this dear old darkling sphere!

And O, to catch but a glimpse of the company thronged around —
The scholars that know it all at last, the poets finally crowned!
There the blithe divines, that fear no more the midnight chimes, sit each
With his halo tilted a trifle, and his harp at easy reach;

There all the jolly Centurions of high or low degree,
This night of nights, as in early time, foregather gloriously,—
Come back, mayhap, from Martian meads, from many an orb come back,
Full sure the cheer they cared for here this night shall have no lack;

For they know the jovial servitors have mingled a noble brew
Of the tipple men call nectarean, the pure celestial dew,
And are passing around ambrosial cakes, while the incense-clouds arise
Of something akin to those earthly fumes not even the Blest despise.

And yet — and yet — could we listen, we might o'erhear them say
They would barter a year of Aidenn to be here for a night and a day;

And if one of us yearns to follow the paths that thitherward
wend —
Let him rest content, — let him have no fear, — he verily
shall in the end.

Then not for the quick alone this hour unbar the entrance
gate,
But a health to the brethren gone before, however they hold
their state!
Nor think it all fancy that to our hearts there comes an an-
swering thrill
From the Dead that echo our Vivats and are of the Century
still.

HAWTHORNE

Harp of New England song,
That even in slumber tremblest with the touch
Of poets who like the four winds from thee waken
All harmonies that to thy strings belong, —
Say, wilt thou blame the younger hands too much
Which from thy laurelled resting-place have taken
Thee, crowned-one, in their hold? There is a name
Should quicken thee! No carol Hawthorne sang,
Yet his articulate spirit, like thine own,
Made answer, quick as flame,
To each breath of the shore from which he sprang,
And prose like his was poesy's high tone.

By measureless degrees
Star follows star throughout the rounded night.
Far off his path began, yet reached the near
Sweet influences of the Pleiades, —
A portion and a sharer of the light
That shall so long outlast each burning sphere.
Beneath the shade and whisper of the pines
Two youths were fostered in the Norseland air;

One found an eagle's plume, and one the wand
Wherewith a seer divines:
Now but the Minstrel lingers of that pair,—
The rod has fallen from the mage's hand.

Gray on thy mountain height,
More fair than wonderland beside thy streams,
Thou with the splendors twain of youth and age,
This was the son who read thy heart aright,
Of whom thou wast beholden in his dreams,—
The one New-Englander! Upon whose page
Thine offspring still are animate, and move
Adown thy paths, a quaint and stately throng:
Grave men of God who made the olden law,
Fair maidens, meet for love,—
All living types that to the coast belong
Since Carver from the prow thy headland saw.

What should the master be
Who to the world New-England's self must render,
Her best interpreter, her very own?
How spake the brooding Mother, strong and tender,
Back-looking through her youth betwixt the moan
Of forests and the murmur of the sea?
"Thou too," she said, "must first be set aside
To keep my ancient vigil for a space,—
Taught by repression, by the combating
With thine own pride of pride,
An unknown watcher in a lonely place
With none on whom thine utterance to fling."

But first of all she fed
Her heart's own favorite upon the store
Of precious things she treasures in her woods,
Of charm and story in her valleys spread.
For him her whispering winds and brooks that pour
Made ceaseless music in the solitudes;

The manifold bright surges of her deep
Gave him their light. Within her voice's call
She lured him on, by roadways overhung
With elms, that he might keep
Remembrance of her legends as they fall
Her shaded walks and gabled roofs among.

Within the mists she drew,
Anon, his silent footsteps, as her own
Were led of old, until he came to be
An eremite, whose life the desert knew,
And gained companionship in dreams alone.
The world, it seemed, had naught for such as he,—
For one who in his heart's deep wilderness
Shrunk darkling, and, whatever wind might blow,
Found no quick use for potent hands and fain,
No chance that might express
To humankind the thoughts which moved him so.
O, deem not those long years were quite in vain!

For his was the brave soul
Which, touched with fire, dwells not on whatsoever
Its outer senses hold in their intent,
But, sleepless even in sleep, must gather toll
Of dreams which pass like barks upon the river
And make each vision Beauty's instrument;
That from its own love Love's delight can tell,
And from its own grief guess the shrouded Sorrow;
From its own joyousness of Joy can sing;
That can predict so well
From its own dawn the lustre of to-morrow,
The whole flight from the flutter of the wing.

And his the gift which sees
A revelation and a tropic sign
In the lone passion-flower, and can discover
The likeness of the far Antipodes,

Though but a leaf is stranded from the brine;
His the fine spirit which is so true a lover
Of sovran Art, that all the becks of life
Allure it not until the work be wrought.
Nay, though the shout and smoke of combat rose,
He, through the changeful strife,
Eternal loveliness more closely sought,
And Beauty's changeless law and sure repose.

Was it not well that one —
One, if no more — should meditate aloof,
Though not for naught the time's heroic quarrel,
From what men rush to do and what is done.
He little knew to join the web and woof
Whereof slow Progress weaves her rich apparel,
But toward the Past half longing turned his head.
His deft hand dallied with its common share
Of human toil, nor sought new loads to lift
But held itself, instead,
All consecrate to uses that make fair,
By right divine of his mysterious gift.

How should the world discern
The artist's self, save through the fine creation
Of his rare moment? How, but from his song,
The unfettered spirit of the minstrel learn?
Yet on this one the stars had set the station
Which to the chief romancer should belong:
Child of the Beautiful! whose regnant brow
She made her canopy, and from his eyes
Looked outward with a steadfast purple gleam.
Who saw him marvelled how
The soul of that impassioned ray could lie
So calm beyond, — unspoken all its dream.

What sibyl to him bore
The secret oracles that move and haunt?

At night's dread noon he scanned the enchanted glass,
Ay, and himself the warlock's mantle wore,
Nor to the thronging phantoms said Avaunt,
But waved his rod and bade them rise and pass;
Till thus he drew the lineaments of men
Who fought the old colonial battles three,
Who with the lustihood of Nature warred
And made her docile, — then
Wrestled with Terror and with Tyranny,
Twin wardens of the scaffold and the sword.

He drew his native land,
The few and rude plantations of her Past,
Fringed by the beaches of her sounding shore;
Her children, as he drew them, there they stand;
There, too, her Present, with an outline cast
Still from the shape those other centuries wore.
Betimes the orchards and the clover-fields
Change into woods o'ershadowing a host
That winds along the Massachusetts Path;
The sword of Standish shields
The Plymouth band, and where the lewd ones boast
Stern Endicott pours out his godly wrath.

Within the Province House
The ancient governors hold their broidered state, —
Still gleam the lights, the shadows come and go;
Here once again the powdered guests carouse,
The masquerade lasts on, the night is late.
Thrice waves a mist-invoking wand, and lo,
What troubled sights! What summit bald and steep
Where stands a ladder 'gainst the accursed tree?
What dark processions thither slowly climb?
Anon, what lost ones keep
Their midnight tryst with forms that evil be,
Around the witch-fire in the forest grim!

Clearly the master's plan
Revealed his people, even as they were,
The prayerful elder and the winsome maid,
The errant roisterer, the Puritan,
Dark Pyncheon, mournful Hester, — all are there.
But none save he in our own time so laid
His summons on man's spirit; none but he,
Whether the light thereof were clear or clouded,
Thus on his canvas fixed the human soul,
The thoughts of mystery,
In deep hearts by this mortal guise enshrouded,
Wild hearts that like the church-bells ring and toll.

Two natures in him strove
Like day with night, his sunshine and his gloom.
To him the stern forefathers' creed descended,
The weight of some inexorable Jove
Prejudging from the cradle to the tomb;
But therewithal the lightsome laughter blended
Of that Arcadian sweetness undismayed
Which finds in Love its law, and graces still
The rood, the penitential symbol worn, —
Which sees, beyond the shade,
The Naiad nymph of every rippling rill,
And hears quick Fancy wind her wilful horn.

What if he brooded long
On Time and Fate, — the ominous progression
Of years that with Man's retributions frown, —
The destinies which round his footsteps throng, —
Justice, that heeds not Mercy's intercession, —
Crime, on its own head calling vengeance down, —
Deaf Chance and blind, that, like the mountain-slide
Puts out Youth's heart of fire and all is dark!
What though the blemish which, in aught of earth,
The maker's hand defied,

Was plain to him, — the one evasive mark
Wherewith Death stamps us for his own at birth!

Ah, none the less we know
He felt the imperceptible fine thrill
With which the waves of being palpitate,
Whether in ecstasy of joy or woe,
And saw the strong divinity of Will
Bringing to halt the stolid tramp of Fate;
Nor from his work was ever absent quite
The presence which, o'ercast it as we may,
Things far beyond our reason can suggest:
There was a drifting light
In Donatello's cell, — a fitful ray
Of sunshine came to hapless Clifford's breast.

Into such blossom brake
Our northern hedge, that neither mortal sadness
Nor the drear thought of lives that strive and fail,
Nor any hues its sombre leaves might take
From clouded skies, could overcome its gladness
Or in the blessing of its shade prevail.
Fresh sprays it yielded them of Merry Mount
For wedding wreaths; blithe Phœbe with the sweet
Pure flowers her promise to her lover gave:
Beside it, from a fount
Where Pearl and Pansie plashed their innocent feet,
A brook ran on and kissed Zenobia's grave.

Silent and dark the spell
Laid on New England by the frozen North;
Long, long the months, — and yet the Winter ends,
The snow-wraiths vanish, and rejoicing well
The dandelions from the grass leap forth,
And Spring through budding birch and willow sends
Her wind of Paradise. And there are left
Poets to sing of all, and welcome still

The robin's voice, the humble-bee's wise drone;
Nor are we yet bereft
Of one whose sagas ever at his will
Can answer back the ocean, tone for tone.

But he whose quickened eye
Saw through New England's life her inmost spirit, —
Her heart, and all the stays on which it leant, —
Returns not, since he laid the pencil by
Whose mystic touch none other shall inherit!
What though its work unfinished lies? Half-bent
The rainbow's arch fades out in upper air;
The shining cataract half-way down the height
Breaks into mist; the haunting strain, that fell
On listeners unaware,
Ends incomplete, but through the starry night
The ear still waits for what it did not tell.

AD VATEM

WHITTIER! the Land that loves thee, she whose child
Thou art, — and whose uplifted hands thou long
Hast stayed with song availing like a prayer, —
She feels a sudden pang, who gave thee birth
And gave to thee the lineaments supreme
Of her own freedom, that she could not make
Thy tissues all immortal, or, if to change,
To bloom through years coeval with her own;
So that no touch of age nor frost of time
Should wither thee, nor furrow thy dear face,
Nor fleck thy hair with silver. Ay, she feels
A double pang that thee, with each new year,
Glad Youth may not revisit, like the Spring
That routs her northern Winter and anew
Melts off the hoar snow from her puissant hills.
She could not make thee deathless; no, but thou,

AD VATEM

Thou sangest her always in abiding verse
And hast thy fame immortal — as we say
Immortal in this Earth that yet must die,
And in this land now fairest and most young
Of all fair lands that yet must perish with it.
Thy words shall last: albeit thou growest old,
Men say; but never old the poet's soul
Becomes; only its covering takes on
A reverend splendor, as in the misty fall
Thine own auroral forests, ere at last
Passes the spirit of the wooded dell.
And stay thou with us long; vouchsafe us long
This brave autumnal presence, ere the hues
Slow fading, — ere the quaver of thy voice,
The twilight of thine eye, move men to ask
Where hides the chariot, — in what sunset vale,
Beyond thy chosen river, champ the steeds
That wait to bear thee skyward? Since we too
Would feign thee, in our tenderness, to be
Inviolate, excepted from thy kind,
And that our bard and prophet best-beloved
Shall vanish like that other: him that stood
Undaunted in the pleasure-house of kings,
And unto kings and crownèd harlots spake
God's truth and judgment. At his sacred feet
Far followed all the lesser men of old
Whose lips were touched with fire, and caught from him
The gift of prophecy; and thus from thee,
Whittier, the younger singers, — whom thou seest
Each emulous to be thy staff this day, —
What learned they? righteous anger, burning scorn
Of the oppressor, love to humankind,
Sweet fealty to country and to home,
Peace, stainless purity, high thoughts of heaven,
And the clear, natural music of thy song.

AD VIGILEM

WHAT seest thou, where the peaks about thee stand,
Far up the ridge that severs from our view
That realm unvisited? What prospect new
Holds thy rapt eye? What glories of the land,
Which from yon loftier cliff thou now hast scanned,
Upon thy visage set their lustrous hue?
Speak, and interpret still, O Watchman true,
The signals answering thy lifted hand!

And bide thee yet! still linger, ere thy feet
To sainted bards that beckon bear thee down —
Though lilies, asphodel, and spikenard sweet
Await thy tread to blossom; and the crown
Long since is woven of Heaven's palm-leaves, meet
For him whom Earth can lend no more renown.

Whittier's Eightieth Birthday,
December 17, 1887.

"ERGO IRIS"

WEARY at length of the ancestral gloom,
The self-same drone, the patter of dull pens,
Nature sent Iris of the rosy plume,
Bearing to Holmes her wonder-working lens;
Grateful, he gave his dearest child her name,
Lit the shrewd East with laughter, love, and tears,—
Bade halt the sun — and arching into fame
His rainbowed fancy now the world enspheres.

On his Eightieth Birthday,
August 29, 1889.

GEORGE ARNOLD

GREENWOOD, NOVEMBER 13, 1865

WE stood around the dreamless form
  Whose strength was so untimely shaken,
Whose sleep not all our love could warm,
  Nor any dearest voice awaken;

And while the Autumn breathed her sighs,
  And dropped a thousand leafy glories,
And all the pathways, and the skies,
  Were mindful of his songs and stories,

Nor failed to wear the mingled hues
  He loved, and knew so well to render,
But wooed — alas, in vain! — their Muse
  For one more tuneful lay and tender,

We paused awhile, — the gathered few
  Who came, in longing, not in duty, —
With eyes that full of weeping grew,
  To look their last upon his beauty.

Death would not rudely rob that face,
  Nor dim its fine Arcadian brightness,
But gave the lines a clearer grace,
  And sleep's repose, and marble's whiteness.

And, gazing there on him so young,
  We thought of all his ended mission,
The broken links, the songs unsung,
  The love that found no ripe fruition;

Till last the old, old question came
  To hearts that beat with life around him,

Why Death, with downward torch aflame,
  Had searched our number till he found him?

Why passed the one who poorly knows
  That blithesome spell for either fortune,
Or mocked with lingering menace those
  Whose pains the final thrust importune;

Or left the toiling ones who bear
  The crowd's neglect, the want that presses,
The woes no human soul can share,
  Nor look, nor spoken word, confesses.

And from the earth no answer came,
  The forest wore a stillness deeper,
The sky and lake smiled on the same,
  And voiceless as the silent sleeper.

And so we turned ourselves away,
  By earth and air and water chidden,
And left him with them, where he lay,
  A sharer of their secret hidden.

And each the staff and shell again
  Took up, and marched with memories haunted;
But henceforth, in our pilgrim-strain,
  We 'll miss a voice that sweetly chaunted!

THE DEATH OF BRYANT

How was it then with Nature when the soul
  Of her own poet heard a voice which came
From out the void, "Thou art no longer lent
To Earth!" when that incarnate spirit, blent
With the abiding force of waves that roll,
  Wind-cradled vapors, circling stars that flame,

She did recall? How went
His antique shade, beaconed upon its way
Through the still aisles of night to universal day?

Her voice it was, her sovereign voice, which bade
The Earth resolve his elemental mould;
And once more came her summons: "Long, too long,
Thou lingerest, and charmest with thy song!
Return! return!" Thus Nature spoke, and made
Her sign; and forthwith on the minstrel old
An arrow, bright and strong,
Fell from the bent bow of the answering Sun,
Who cried, "The song is closed, the invocation done!"

But not as for those youths dead ere their prime,
New-entered on their music's high domain,
Then snatched away, did all things sorrow own:
No utterance now like that sad sweetest tone
When Bion died, and the Sicilian rhyme
Bewailed; no sobbing of the reeds that plain
Rehearsing some last moan
Of Lycidas; no strains which skyward swell
For Adonais still, and still for Asphodel!

The Muses wept not for him as for those
Of whom each vanished like a beauteous star
Quenched ere the shining midwatch of the night;
The greenwood Nymphs mourned not his lost delight;
Nor Echo, hidden in the tangled close,
Grieved that she could not mimic him afar.
He ceased not from our sight
Like him who, in the first glad flight of spring,
Fell as an eagle pierced with shafts from his own wing.

This was not Thyrsis! no, the minstrel lone
And reverend, the woodland singer hoar,
Who was dear Nature's nursling, and the priest

Whom most she loved; nor had his office ceased
But for her mandate: "Seek again thine own;
The walks of men shall draw thy steps no more!"
Softly, as from a feast
The guest departs that hears a low recall,
He went, and left behind his harp and coronal.

"*Return!*" she cried, "unto thine own return!
Too long the pilgrimage; too long the dream
In which, lest thou shouldst be companionless,
Unto the oracles thou hadst access,—
The sacred groves that with my presence yearn."
The voice was heard by mountain, dell, and stream,
Meadow and wilderness—
All fair things vestured by the changing year,
Which now awoke in joy to welcome one most dear.

"*He comes!*" declared the unseen ones that haunt
The dark recesses, the infinitude
Of whispering old oaks and soughing pines.
"*He comes!*" the warders of the forest shrines
Sang joyously. "His spirit ministrant
Henceforth with us shall walk the underwood,
Till mortal ear divines
Its music added to our choral hymn,
Rising and falling far through archways deep and dim!"

The orchard fields, the hillside pastures green,
Put gladness on; the rippling harvest-wave
Ran like a smile, as if a moment there
His shadow poised in the midsummer air
Above; the cataract took a pearly sheen
Even as it leapt; the winding river gave
A sound of welcome where
He came, and trembled, far as to the sea
It moves from rock-ribbed heights where its dark fountains be.

His presence brooded on the rolling plain,
And on the lake there fell a sudden calm, —
His own tranquillity; the mountain bowed
Its head, and felt the coolness of a cloud,
And murmured, "*He is passing!*" and again
Through all its firs the wind swept like a psalm;
Its eagles, thunder-browed,
In that mist-moulded shape their kinsmen knew,
And circled high, and in his mantle soared from view.

So drew he to the living veil, which hung
Of old above the deep's unimaged face,
And sought his own. Henceforward he is free
Of vassalage to that mortality
Which men have given a sepulchre among
The pathways of their kind, — a resting-place
Where, bending one great knee,
Knelt the proud mother of a mighty land
In tenderness, and came anon a plumèd band.

Came one by one the seasons meetly drest,
To sentinel the relics of their seer.
First Spring — upon whose head a wreath was set
Of wind-flowers and the yellow-violet —
Advanced. Then Summer led his loveliest
Of months, one ever to the minstrel dear,
(Her sweet eyes dewy wet,)
June, and her sisters, whose brown hands entwine
The brier-rose and the bee-haunted columbine.

Next, Autumn, like a monarch sad of heart,
Came, tended by his melancholy days.
Purple he wore, and bore a golden rod,
His sceptre; and let fall upon the sod
A lone fringed-gentian ere he would depart.
Scarce had his train gone darkling down the ways
When Winter thither trod, —

Winter, with beard and raiment blown before,
That was so seeming like our poet old and hoar.

What forms are these amid the pageant fair,
  Harping with hands that falter? What sad throng?
They wait in vain, a mournful brotherhood,
And listen where their laurelled elder stood
For some last music fallen through the air.
  "What cold, thin atmosphere now hears thy song?"
    They ask, and long have wooed
The woods and waves that knew him, but can learn
Naught save the hollow, haunting cry, "*Return! return!*"

1878.

W. W.

GOOD-BYE, Walt!
Good-bye, from all you loved of earth —
Rock, tree, dumb creature, man and woman —
  To you, their comrade human.
    The last assault
Ends now; and now in some great world has birth
A minstrel, whose strong soul finds broader wings,
  More brave imaginings.
Stars crown the hilltop where your dust shall lie,
  Even as we say good-bye,
    Good-bye, old Walt!

Lines sent to his funeral
with an ivy wreath,
March 30, 1892.

BYRON

A HUNDRED years, 't is writ, — O presage vain! —
  Earth wills her offspring life, ere one complete
His term, and rest from travail, and be fain
  To lay him down in natural death and sweet.

What of her child whose swift divining soul
With triple fervor burns the torch apace,
And in one radiant third compacts the whole
Ethereal flame that lights him on his race?

Ay, what of him who to the winds upheld
A star-like brand, with pride and joy and tears,
And lived in that fleet course from youth to eld,
Count them who will, his century of years?

The Power that arches heaven's orbway round
Gave to this planet's brood its soul of fire,
Its heart of passion, — and for life unbound
By chain or creed the measureless desire;

Gave to one poet these, and manifold
High thoughts, beyond our lesser mortal share, —
Gave dreams of beauty, yes, and with a mould
The antique world had worshipped made him fair;

Then touched his lips with music, — lit his brow,
Even as a fane upon a sunward hill,
For strength, gave scorn, the pride that would not bow,
The glorious weapon of a dauntless will.

But that the surcharged spirit — a vapor pent
In beetling crags — a torrent barriered long —
A wind 'gainst heaven's four winds imminent —
Might memorably vent its noble song,

Each soaring gift was fretted with a band
That deadlier clung which way he fain would press:
His were an adverse age, a sordid land,
Gauging his heart by their own littleness;

Blind guides! the fiery spirit scorned their curb,
And Byron's love and gladness, — such the wise

Of ministrants whom evil times perturb,—
To wrath and melancholy changed their guise.

Yet this was he whose swift imaginings
Engirt fair Liberty from clime to clime,—
From Alp to ocean with an eagle's wings
Pursued her flight, in Harold's lofty rime.

Where the mind's freedom was not, could not be,
That bigot soil he rendered to disdain,
And sought, like Omar in his revelry,
At least the semblance of a joy to gain.

Laughter was at his beck, and wisdom's ruth
Sore-learned from fierce experiences that test
Life's masquerade, the carnival of youth,
The world of man. Then Folly lost her zest,

Yet left undimmed (her valediction sung
With Juan's smiles and tears) his natal ray
Of genius inextinguishably young,—
An Eôs through those mists proclaiming day.

How then, when to his ear came Hellas' cry,
He shred the garlands of the wild night's feast,
And rose a chief, to lead — alas, to die
And leave men mourning for that music ceased!

America! When nations for thy knell
Listened, one prophet oracled thy part:
Now, in thy morn of strength, remember well
The bard whose chant foretold thee as thou art.

Sky, mount, and forest, and high-sounding main,
The storm-cloud's vortex, splendor of the day,
Gloom of the night,— with these abide his strain,—
And these are thine, though he has passed away;

Their elemental force had roused to might
Great Nature's child in this her realm supreme,—
From their commingling he had guessed aright
The plenitude of all we know or dream.

Read thou aright his vision and his song,
That this enfranchised spirit of the spheres
May know his name henceforth shall take no wrong,
Outbroadening still yon ocean and these years!

1888.

ARIEL

In Memory of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Born on the Fourth of August, A. D. 1792

Wert thou on earth to-day, immortal one,
How wouldst thou, in the starlight of thine eld,
The likeness of that morntide look upon
Which men beheld?
How might it move thee, imaged in time's glass,
As when the tomb has kept
Unchanged the face of one who slept
Too soon, yet moulders not, though seasons come and pass?

Has Death a wont to stay the soul no less?
And art thou still what Shelley was erewhile,—
A feeling born of music's restlessness —
A child's swift smile
Between its sobs — a wandering mist that rose
At dawn — a cloud that hung
The Euganéan hills among;
Thy voice, a wind-harp's strain in some enchanted close?

Thyself the wild west wind, O boy divine,
Thou fain wouldst be, — the spirit which in its breath
Wooes yet the seaward ilex and the pine
That wept thy death?

Or art thou still the incarnate child of song
Who gazed, as if astray
From some uncharted stellar way,
With eyes of wonder at our world of grief and wrong?

Yet thou wast Nature's prodigal; the last
Unto whose lips her beauteous mouth she bent
An instant, ere thy kinsmen, fading fast,
Their lorn way went.
What though the faun and oread had fled?
A tenantry thine own,
Peopling their leafy coverts lone,
With thee still dwelt as when sweet Fancy was not dead;

Not dead as now, when we the visionless,
In nature's alchemy more woeful wise,
Say that no thought of us her depths possess,—
No love, her skies.
Not ours to parley with the whispering June,
The genii of the wood,
The shapes that lurk in solitude,
The cloud, the mounting lark, the wan and waning moon.

For thee the last time Hellas tipped her hills
With beauty; India breathed her midnight moan,
Her sigh, her ecstasy of passion's thrills,
To thee alone.
Such rapture thine, and the supremer gift
Which can the minstrel raise,
Above the myrtle and the bays,
To watch the sea of pain whereon our galleys drift.

Therefrom arose with thee that lyric cry,
Sad cadence of the disillusioned soul
That asks of heaven and earth its destiny,—
Or joy or dole.

Wild requiem of the heart whose vibratings,
With laughter fraught, and tears,
Beat through the century's dying years
While for one more dark round the old Earth plumes her wings.

No answer came to thee; from ether fell
No voice, no radiant beam; and in thy youth
How were it else, when still the oracle
Withholds its truth?
We sit in judgment, — we, above thy page
Judge thee and such as thee,
Pale heralds, sped too soon to see
The marvels of our late yet unanointed age!

The slaves of air and light obeyed afar
Thy summons, Ariel; their elf-horns wound
Strange notes which all uncapturable are
Of broken sound.
That music thou alone couldst rightly hear
(O rare impressionist!)
And mimic. Therefore still we list
To its ethereal fall in this thy cyclic year.

Be then the poet's poet still! for none
Of them whose minstrelsy the stars have blessed
Has from expression's wonderland so won
The unexpressed, —
So wrought the charm of its elusive note
On us, who yearn in vain
To mock the pæan and the plain
Of tides that rise and fall with sweet mysterious rote.

Was it not well that the prophetic few,
So long inheritors of that high verse,
Dwelt in the mount alone, and haply knew
What stars rehearse?

But now with foolish cry the multitude
Awards at last the throne,
And claims thy cloudland for its own
With voices all untuned to thy melodious mood.

What joy it was to haunt some antique shade
Lone as thine echo, and to wreak my youth
Upon thy song, — to feel the throbs which made
Thy bliss, thy ruth, —
And thrill I knew not why, and dare to feel
Myself an heir unknown
To lands the poet treads alone
Ere to his soul the gods their presence quite reveal!

Even then, like thee, I vowed to dedicate
My powers to beauty; ay, but thou didst keep
The vow, whilst I knew not the afterweight
That poets weep,
The burthen under which one needs must bow,
The rude years envying
My voice the notes it fain would sing
For men belike to hear, as still they hear thee now.

Oh, the swift wind, the unrelenting sea!
They loved thee, yet they lured thee unaware
To be their spoil, lest alien skies to thee
Should seem more fair;
They had their will of thee, yet aye forlorn
Mourned the lithe soul's escape,
And gave the strand thy mortal shape
To be resolved in flame whereof its life was born.

Afloat on tropic waves, I yield once more
In age that heart of youth unto thy spell.
The century wanes: thy voice thrills as of yore
When first it fell.

GIFFORD

Would that I too, so had I sung a lay
The least upborne of thine,
Had shared thy pain! Not so divine
Our light, as faith to chant the far auroral day.

On the Caribbean Sea
(Revisited 1892).

GIFFORD

I

THE CLOSED STUDIO

This was a magician's cell:
Beauty's self obeyed his spell!
When the air was gloom without,
Grace and Color played about
Yonder easel. Many a sprite,
Golden-winged with heaven's light,
Let the upper skies go drear,
Spreading his rare plumage here.

Skyward now,— alas the day! —
See the truant Ariels play!
Cloud and air with light they fill,
Wandering at idle will,
Nor (with half their tasks undone)
Stay to mourn the master gone.
Only in this hollow room,
Now, the stillness and the gloom.

II

OF WINTER NIGHTS

When the long nights return, and find us met
Where he was wont to meet us, and the flame

On the deep hearth-stone gladdens as of old,
And there is cheer, as ever in that place,
How shall our utmost nearing close the gap
Known, but till then scarce measured? Or what light
Of cheer for us, his gracious presence gone,
His speech delayed, till none shall fail to miss
That halting voice, yet sure, speaking, it seemed
The one apt word? For well the painter knew
Art's alchemy and law; her nobleness
Was in his soul, her wisdom in his speech,
And loyalty was housed in that true heart,
Gentle yet strong, and yielding not one whit
Of right or purpose. Now, not more afar
The light of last year's Yule fire than the smile
Of Gifford, nor more irreclaimable
Its vapor mingled with the wintry air.

1880.

J. G. H.

Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit.
HOR., *Carm.* I, 24.

WHO knew him, loved him. His the longing heart
For what his youth had missed, his manhood known,—
The haunts of Song, the fellowship of Art,—
And all their kin he strove to make his own.

But his the good, true heart not thus content:
The words that fireside groups at eve repeat
He spoke, or sang; and far his sayings went,
And simple households found his music sweet.

So Heaven was kind and gave him naught to grieve.
Among his loved he woke at morn from rest,—
One smile — one pang — and gained betimes his leave,
Ere Strength had lost its use, or Life its zest.

1881.

THE DEATH OF AN INVINCIBLE SOLDIER

ON A GREAT MAN WHOSE MIND IS CLOUDING

THAT sovereign thought obscured? That vision clear
  Dimmed in the shadow of the sable wing,
  And fainter grown the fine interpreting
Which as an oracle was ours to hear!
Nay, but the Gods reclaim not from the seer
  Their gift, — although he ceases here to sing,
  And, like the antique sage, a covering
Draws round his head, knowing what change is near.

1882.

ON THE DEATH OF AN INVINCIBLE SOLDIER

O WHAT a sore campaign,
  Of which men long shall tell,
Ended when he was slain —
  When this our greatest fell!

For him no mould had cast
  A bullet surely sped;
No falchion, welded fast,
  His iron blood had shed.

Death on the hundredth field
  Had failed to bring him low;
He was not born to yield
  To might of mortal foe.

Even to himself unknown,
  He bore the fated sword,
Forged somewhere near His throne
  Of battles still the Lord.

That weapon when he drew,
  Back rolled the wrath of men, —
Their onset feebler grew,
  The Nation rose again.

The splendor and the fame —
  Whisper of these alone,
Nor say that round his name
  A moment's shade was thrown;

Count not each satellite
  'Twixt him and glory's sun,
The circling things of night;
  Number his battles won.

Where then to choose his grave?
  From mountain unto sea,
The Land he fought to save
  His sepulchre shall be.

Yet to its fruitful earth
  His quickening ashes lend,
That chieftains may have birth,
  And patriots without end.

His carven scroll shall read:
  Here rests the valiant heart
Whose duty was his creed, —
  Whose lot, the warrior's part.

Who, when the fight was done,
  The grim last foe defied,
Naught knew save victory won,
  Surrendered not — but died.

1885.

LIBERTY ENLIGHTENING THE WORLD

WARDER at ocean's gate,
Thy feet on sea and shore,
Like one the skies await
When time shall be no more!
What splendors crown thy brow?
What bright dread angel Thou,
Dazzling the waves before
Thy station great?

"My name is Liberty!
From out a mighty land
I face the ancient sea,
I lift to God my hand;
By day in Heaven's light,
A pillar of fire by night,
At ocean's gate I stand
Nor bend the knee.

"The dark Earth lay in sleep,
Her children crouched forlorn,
Ere on the western steep
I sprang to height, reborn:
Then what a joyous shout
The quickened lands gave out,
And all the choir of morn
Sang anthems deep.

"Beneath yon firmament,
The New World to the Old
My sword and summons sent,
My azure flag unrolled:
The Old World's hands renew
Their strength; the form ye view

Came from a living mould
In glory blent.

"O ye, whose broken spars
Tell of the storms ye met,
Enter! fear not the bars
Across your pathway set;
Enter at Freedom's porch,
For you I lift my torch,
For you my coronet
Is rayed with stars.

"But ye that hither draw
To desecrate my fee,
Nor yet have held in awe
The justice that makes free,—
Avaunt, ye darkling brood!
By Right my house hath stood:
My name is Liberty,
My throne is Law."

O wonderful and bright,
Immortal Freedom, hail!
Front, in thy fiery might,
The midnight and the gale;
Undaunted on this base
Guard well thy dwelling-place:
Till the last sun grow pale
Let there be light!

1888.

INSCRIPTIONS

I

THAT border land 'twixt Day and Night be mine,
And choice companions gathered there to dine,
With talk, song, mirth, soup, salad, bread, and wine.

TWILIGHT CLUB, 1883.

TO BAYARD TAYLOR

II

At set of sun one lone star rules the skies,
Night spreads a feast the day's long toil has won:
Eat, drink, — enough, no more, — and speak, ye wise,
Speak — but enough, no more, at set of sun!

Sunset Club, 1891.

ON WHITE CARNATIONS GIVEN ME FOR MY BIRTHDAY

Exquisite tufts of perfume and of light,
Fair gift of Summer unto Autumn borne,
Were but the years ye calendar as white,
As sweet, as you, Age could not be forlorn.

Yet, beauteous symbols of my only gain —
Love, portioned from your givers' envied share,
Honor, whose laurel at their feet hath lain —
Make me this night of Life's waste unaware!

October 8, 1894.

TO BAYARD TAYLOR

WITH A COPY OF THE ILIAD

Bayard, awaken not this music strong,
While round thy home the indolent sweet breeze
Floats lightly as the summer breath of seas
O'er which Ulysses heard the Sirens' song.
Dreams of low-lying isles to June belong,
And Circe holds us in her haunts of ease;
But later, when these high ancestral trees
Are sere, and such melodious languors wrong
The reddening strength of the autumnal year,
Yield to heroic words thy ear and eye; —

Intent on these broad pages thou shalt hear
The trumpets' blare, the Argive battle-cry,
And see Achilles hurl his hurtling spear,
And mark the Trojan arrows make reply!

TO W. S.

A DREAD voice from the mountain cried to me
Even as I woke this daybreak, *Thou art old!*
But then thy swift song answered dauntlessly,
"'T is Love, not age, that hath thee in his hold."
O minstrel dear, O friend with heart of gold
And hand so leal, and voice of music free,
This day I crest with thanks each billow rolled
To Scotia's shores across our northern Sea!

KELP ROCK, NEW CASTLE, N. H.
October 8, 1890.

HYMN OF THE WEST

O THOU, whose glorious orbs on high
Engird the earth with splendor round,
From out thy secret place draw nigh
The courts and temples of this ground;
Eternal Light,
Fill with thy might
These domes that in thy purpose grew,
And lift a nation's heart anew!

Illumine Thou each pathway here,
To show the marvels God hath wrought!
Since first thy people's chief and seer
Looked up with that prophetic thought,
Bade Time unroll
The fateful scroll,

And empire unto Freedom gave
From cloudland height to tropic wave.

Poured through the gateways of the North
Thy mighty rivers join their tide,
And, on the wings of morn sent forth,
Their mists the far-off peaks divide.
By Thee unsealed,
The mountains yield
Ores that the wealth of Ophir shame,
And gems enwrought of seven-hued flame.

Lo, through what years the soil hath lain
At thine own time to give increase —
The greater and the lesser grain,
The ripening boll, the myriad fleece!
Thy creatures graze
Appointed ways;
League after league across the land
The ceaseless herds obey thy hand.

Thou, whose high archways shine most clear
Above the plenteous Western plain,
Thine ancient tribes from round the sphere
To breathe its quickening air are fain:
And smiles the sun
To see made one
Their brood throughout Earth's greenest space,
Land of the new and lordlier race!

World's Fair, St. Louis, Mo., 1904.

H. VAN D.

(A TOAST)

Health to the poet, scholar, wit, divine,
In whom sweet Nature would all gifts combine

To make us hang upon his lips and say —
The Admirable Crichton of our day,
Whose quill and lute and voice are weapons shear
That quite outvie that gallant's swift rapier, —
Whose dulcet English, from its font that wells,
This night, the Scotsman's dozen tongues excels!
Long may he live, to wear the cloistral gown,
Or from his Little Rivers bring to town —
From every haunt where purling waters flow —
The mystic flower that only votaries know!
Wouldst view what Nature's portraiture is like?
The Dame herself hath sat to this Van Dyke.

LOTOS CLUB, December 23, 1904.

TO DR. WALDSTEIN

ON HIS PROPOSAL TO EXCAVATE HERCULANEUM[1]

YES, Doctor, surely we recall
How at the Louvre you chanced to score so, —
'T was there you found against some wall
The head that matched an Elgin torso!
We know you born with that sixth sense,
The presage of discoveries mighty,
Nor like — unwitting or prepense —
To land a made-up Aphrodite.

Speed then, I pray, lest in the lurch
You leave a wistful graybeard mortal;
Begin apace your classic search
Beyond each Herculaneum portal!
Let others northward seek the stem
That swings this planetary apple,
Whilst you, to win a diadem
More worth, with Pluto's self must grapple.

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TO DR. WALDSTEIN

The lettered Roman aired his Greek,
Drew forth his scrolls from shelf and panel,—
(So Gray and Walpole knew to speak,
To read, their French brought over Channel);
Untomb those sealed armaria! Let
Your hand among their riches wander,
Until, half-dazed, your eyes are set
Upon — some play of great Menander!

Byzantium's Christian priests, they say,
With those rare jestings heaped the pyre;
Lest ruthless, grim Vesuvius may
Restore them to the world's desire.
The mask, the marble and the bronze,
The eagle from Bellona's eyrie,—
Light trophies these to him who cons,
First of his time, those lost papyri,—

Whose sight takes in at last complete
The lines to Sappho's smile and tresses
Alcæus wrote — yet made retreat
In awe, as he himself confesses,—
Or . . . thought to wake the pulse's thrill! . . .
Finds but one ode, all fire and air,
By Her,— one hymn diviner still
Than that ecstatic Lesbian prayer.

There's Pindar,— haply from the mound
You 'll lift a six-and-fortieth pæan,
Or, blest indeed, disclose thrice-crowned —
Ye stars! — a trilogue Sophoclean;
Yet his, be sure, the loftiest meed
Whose spell shall split the Earth with wonder,
And bid us see Prometheus Freed,
That vanished Titan, loom from under.

Within some niche (once overhung
  By whose sea-gazing cool pavilion?)
Sleep in their charm forever young
  What idylls of the sweet Sicilian!
Not vain, Theocritus, our dream,—
  Fresh songs of Etna's springs and grasses,
Of love-distracted Polypheme,
  Of streets where couched Adonis passes.

What Dialogues, suppressed by Fate,
  Of Plato's metaphysic rival,
Perchance in durance yet await
  A bimillennial revival;
And "Hold!"—I hear Virgilians say—
  "Was there no Latin then imbedded?
Slight not the golden verse, we pray,
  Of bards to pure Augustan wedded."

So, Doctor, plead with State and Throne,
  Adjure each latter-day Mæcenas;
Our pence and plaudits are your own,—
Our mandate—*Frange nunc catenas!*
Such vintage give the world to quaff,
  Age-stored beneath its tedious rumble,
And many a laurelled cenotaph
  Long ere your name dies out shall crumble.

March 10, 1905.

JOHN HAY

Fall'n like an eagle from his scaur—
  From yon clear height none dared to soil!
Beats on that noble heart no more
  Above the warfare and the spoil,—

The poet-statesman's, in whose thought
  Self had no place since first he shared

The work his boyhood's chieftain wrought,
The faith which life nor substance spared?

There are who serve their Country well
Yet stoop to crave her light acclaim,—
His patriot pulses leapt and fell
Nor asked the glory of a name.

Love, honor, rose to him indeed,
As vapors toward the sunlit sky,
But his the generous heart, at need,
Without a pang to put them by.

Even so, a white star on his crest,
We knew him in his stainless youth;
Even so — not else than loyalest —
The world his manhood learned in sooth;

And if there be — and if there be
A realm where lives still forward roll,
Even so — no other — strong and free
Through time and space shine on, dear Soul!

July 1, 1905.

HOMEWARD BOUND

ON THE RETURN TO AMERICA OF THE REMAINS OF JOHN PAUL JONES

With proud, uplifted head
The fair Republic claims her dead;
With outstretched hands — the hands he fought to free —
Awaits, O not in ruth,
The lover of her youth,
Her Bayard of the sea.
Let the sea once more caress him
And the Land he loved possess him,

For now the years are sped —
The proud Republic claims her dead.

Atlantic waves, that smiled
Of old so oft to greet your child,
List not to hear his battle-orders ring;
Care not to break his sleep,
But softly, softly bring
Your nursling of the deep,
With his birthright flag above him,
To the shores that own and love him, —
Of old their rover wild,
Now held in slumber as a child.

The oaken ship that won
His storied sea-fight, gun to gun,
To Freedom's flag its red baptism gave, —
Aflame, still made reply,
Fought on to victory,
Then plunged beneath the wave.
Let the squadrons close around him
Till the nation's hands have crowned him
Whose fierce sea-fight he won
'Twixt the setting and the rising of the sun.

Not far from ocean's strand,
His tomb, made lasting by her hand,
Shall henceforth tell within the guarded field
Of him who that dread night
Began anew the fight,
And, sinking, could not yield.
Down the lengthened line bequeath it,
Let our sailor sons enwreathe it,
And the challenge and command
Be heard anear it and the strand.

MY GODCHILD

Erect, with shining head,
The great Republic claims her dead;
Nor, in that day when every stripe and star
Proclaims the reign of Peace,
Shall honor to him cease
Nor Fame his laurel mar.
Though no battle-peal awake him,
Time upon its scroll shall make him
One of Earth's heroes dead
Whose deeds that golden day more swiftly sped.

July 12, 1905.

MY GODCHILD

(TO R. K. P. D.)

ROSEMARY! could we give you
"Remembrance," with your name,
Ere long you 'd tell us something
Of Heaven, whence you came, —
Of those enchanted meadows
Where, through the ceaseless day,
The children waiting to be born
Wonder, and sing, and play, —
And where you wandered carolling
Until the angel's hand
Closed down your eyes — then opened them
To light this earthly Land, —
This Land whereto they 've sent you
To share its joy, its strife,
Its love, and learn through Womanhood
How rich, how deep, is Life.

1906.

WRITTEN AT THE OPENING OF A HOUSE-BOOK

(TO MR. AND MRS. W. O. P.)

TRAILING hemlock, serried spruce,
Pine-tree, staunch and bold,
Still, as 't is your royal use, —
Each a stately seneschal, —
Guard this home through seasons long
From summer's heat and winter's cold!
Fame shall gild its every wall,
Beauty dwell with art and song,
And (of all life's guerdons best)
Love light the hearth — where blessings fall
On Master, Mistress, happy Guest.

BAR HARBOR, August 22, 1906.

70° NORTH

(TO H. M. A.)

WHAT 's this! your tall ship sighted at the Line?
Some three degrees I 'd fain sail back to meet you, —
But orders hold, so let me flash this sign
Astern, and greet you.

You, who so oft have hailed me, ship to ship, —
A cheery consort in our "roaring forties";
Prithee, to whom shall not my ensigns dip,
If he your sort is?

Long on your desk (long in that "Study" chair —
To change the metaphor), dear Alden, still be!
The sturdiest master that was ever there,
Or ever will be.

70° NORTH

I mind me how those songs which bore my name
Found grace with you — those *cantilenae parvae* —
Yes, even my Viking (ere his namesake came,
And bounteous Harvey).

"H. M.," Her Majesty's? No, though in sooth
Victorian decades somewhat overlay us,
I read, with that braw accent of our youth,
Henricus Meus.

For am I not of them who, down the years
Now closed in Life's inexorable journal,
Have known your hand's strong grip that time endears,
Your words fraternal?

Yet knew you best, and last, from golden books,
The rare quintessence of your mystic spirit, —
When *that* through mortal eyes no longer looks
May mine be near it!

November 10, 1906.

POEMS OF GREECE

(A portion of the Tenth and the whole of the Thirteenth Idyls of Theocritus are given in the following translations. The text of "Hylas" is somewhat in dispute, and as the translator has examined various editions, his versions will be found to differ, in one or two places, from the common reading. He has also, with good authority, divided the alternate songs of "The Reapers" into the couplets, which so exactly balance each other, and which are approved by critical and poetical instinct. The English hexameter has been selected as the only measure adapted to a literal and a lineal rendering of the peculiar idyllic verse. These specimens of the Sicilian-Doric poetry, including a pastoral, and a semi-epic theme, are from a version of the works of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, which was begun many years ago, but has never been completed.)

THE REAPERS

Milo and Battus

MILO.

But come now, down with the harvest!
Strike up also, I pray, a sweetheart song of the maiden;
Thus will you work more lightly: — I think you used to be tuneful.

BATTUS (*sings*).

"Sing with me, O Pierian Muses, the lass that is lissome;
For ye make all things fair, whatever ye touch, ye Divine Ones!

"Graceful Bombýcê, they call you a Syrian, scrawny and sunburnt, —
All but me, who alone pronounce you the color of honey.

"Ay, and the violet's dark, and the hyacinth wearing its letters:
None the less, for all that, are they sorted first in the garlands.

"She-goats hunt for the clover, the wolf goes after the she-goat,
After the plough the crane, — but I've gone raving for you, love!

"Would that mine were as much as Crœsus, they say, was possessed of;
Then should we twain, in gold, be set up before Aphrodite;

"You with a — yes, with a flute, and a rose, or, maybe, an apple;
I, with new Amyclæan shoes, and a robe in the fashion.

"Graceful Bombýcê, your feet are pretty as dice that twinkle;
Soft is your voice; but your manner, — I have no words to express it!"

MILO.

Look you, the lad has been sly, composing us elegant ditties:
See how well he has measured the form of his even rhythm!

O this beard of mine, which I seem to have grown to no purpose!
But, to go on, now hear these words of the sage Lytiersês:

(*Sings.*)

"O Dêmêter, abounding in fruit and ears of the harvest,
Well may this field be worked and yield a crop beyond measure!

"Hard, bind hard, ye binders, the sheaves, lest ever a passer
Say, 'These men are poor sticks, and their pay is cash out of pocket.'

"Toward the north-wind let your swath of grain in the cutting
Look, or else to the west, for thus the ear will grow fuller.

"Threshers, threshing the corn, should shun the slumbers of noonday;
That is the very hour when the chaff flies off from the wheat-stalk.

HYLAS

"Reapers, begin your toil when the tuft-lark soars from the meadow:
Cease when he sleeps: besides, in the heat of the day take your leisure.

"Give me a frog's life, boys! he needs, to pour out his tipple,
No cup-bearer, not he, for't is up to his mouth all around him.

"Better to boil the lentil, you 'll find it, niggardly steward:
Ware lest you cut your hand in making two halves of a cummin."

(*Speaks.*)

Staves like these 't is fit that men at work in the sunshine
Troll; but, lad, 't were better to prate of your starveling passion
Unto your mother awake in her bed at break of the morning.

HYLAS

Not for ourselves alone the God, who fathered that stripling
Erôs, begat him, Nicias, as we have flattered us: neither
Unto ourselves the first have beauties seemed to be beauties, —
Not unto us, who are mortal and do not foresee the morrow;
But that heart of brass, Amphitryôn's son, who awaited
Stoutly the ruthless lion, he too was fond of a youth once —
Graceful Hylas, the lad with the curling locks, — and he taught him
All fair things, as a father would teach the child of his bosom,
All which himself had learned, and great and renowned in song grown;
Nor was he ever at all apart from him, neither at midday,

Nor when the white-horsed car of Eôs ran up to Zeus-
ward, —
Nor when the twittering chickens looked to their nest, and
the mother
Over her smoky perch at eve had fluttered her pinions, —
So might the lad be featly trained to his heart's own liking,
And, with himself for guide, grow up a genuine hero.
Now when it chanced that Jason, the son of Æson, went
sailing
After the Golden Fleece, and with him followed the
nobles, —
Picked from all the towns and ripe for that service, —
among them
Also to rich Iôlkos came the laboring hero,
He that was son of Alcmêne, — the heroine of Midea;
By his side went Hylas down to the bulwarked Argo, —
Which good ship the clashing Cyanean rocks in no wise
Touched, but clove as an eagle, — and so ran into deep
Phasis, —
Clove through a mighty surge, whence low reefs jutted in
those days.
So at the time when the Pleiads rise, — and out-of-way
places
Pasture the youngling lamb, and Spring has turned, — the
immortal
Flower of heroes began of their voyage then to be mindful,
And, having sat them down again in the hollow Argo,
Came to the Hellespont, a south wind blowing, the third
day,
And within the Propontis their anchorage made, — where
oxen
Broaden Ciánian furrows afield, and brighten the plough-
share.
There stepping out on the beach they got the meal of the
evening,
Two by two; and many were strewing a couch for them
all, since

Close at hand lay a meadow, — to furnish sedge for the bedding:
Thence sharp flowering-rush and low galingale they cut them.
And with a brazen ewer the fair-haired Hylas was seeking
Water, for Héraklês' supper and sturdy Telamon's also,—
Comrades twain, that ever were used to eat at one table.
Erelong, too, he spied a spring in a low-lying hollow:
Round its brim there grew a host of rushes, and dark-blue
Celandine rose, and pale-green maiden-hair: and parsley
Throve, and the witch-grass tangling wild through watery places.
Now the Nymphs were starting a dance in the midst of the fountain, —
Sleepless Nymphs, divine, to country people a terror, —
Malis, Euneica, and one with her look of the Spring, Nycheia.
Soothly, the lad was holding the huge jar over the water,
Dipping in haste, when one and all grew fast to his hand there.
Love wound close around the gentle hearts of the bevy,
Love for the Argive boy: and headlong into the dark pool
Fell he, as when a fiery star has fallen from heaven
Headlong into the sea, and a sailor cries to his shipmates:
"Loosen the tackle, lads! — O, here comes a wind for sailing!"
As for the Nymphs, they held on their knees the tearful stripling,
And with their kindly words were fain to comfort his spirit.
But Amphitryôn's son, alarmed for the youth, bestirred him,
Taking Scythian-wise his bended bow and its arrows,
Also the club, which his right hand ever to hold was accustomed.
Thrice, ay, thrice he shouted HYLAS! loud as his deep throat
Could, while thrice the lad heard underneath, and a thin voice

Came from the wave, and O, so near he was, yet so distant!
And as a thick-maned lion, that hears a whimpering fawn cry
Far away, — some lion that munches flesh on the mountains, —
Speeds from his lair to a meal which surely waits for his coming,
So, through untrodden brambles, Héraklês, craving the dear youth,
Sped in tremor and scoured great reaches this way and that way.
Reckless are they who love! what ills he suffered while ranging
Cliffs and thickets! and light, beside this, seemed the quest of Jason.
Meanwhile the ship lay still, with her tackle hoisted above her,
And, — of those present, — the youth were clearing the sails at midnight,
Waiting for Héraklês: he, wherever his feet might lead him,
Wild went on, for a cruel god was tearing his heartstrings.
Fairest Hylas is numbered thus with the Happy Immortals:
Nathless the heroes were scoffing at Héraklês as a deserter,
Since he had fled from the ship of the thirty benches, from Argo.
Onward he trudged afoot to Colchis and welcomeless Phasis.

I. THE DEATH OF AGAMEMNON

FROM HOMER

[*Odyssey*, XI, 385–456]

ODYSSEUS IN HADES

AFTERWARD, soon as the chaste Persephone hither and thither
Now had scattered afar the slender shades of the women,

Came the sorrowing ghost of Agamemnon Atreides;
Round whom thronged, besides, the souls of the others who also
Died, and met their fate, with him in the house of Aigisthos.
He, then, after he drank of the dark blood, instantly knew me, —
Ay, and he wailed aloud, and plenteous tears was shedding,
Toward me reaching hands and eagerly longing to touch me;
But he was shorn of strength, nor longer came at his bidding
That great force which once abode in his pliant members.
Seeing him thus, I wept, and my heart was laden with pity,
And, uplifting my voice, in wingèd words I addressed him:
"King of men, Agamemnon, thou glorious son of Atreus,
Say, in what wise did the doom of prostrate death overcome thee?
Was it within thy ships thou wast subdued by Poseidon
Rousing the dreadful blast of winds too hard to be mastered,
Or on the firm-set land did banded foemen destroy thee
Cutting their oxen off, and their flocks so fair, or, it may be,
While in a town's defence, or in that of women, contending?"
Thus I spake, and he, replying, said to me straightway:
"Nobly-born and wise Odysseus, son of Laertes,
Neither within my ships was I subdued by Poseidon
Rousing the dreadful blast of winds too hard to be mastered,
Nor on the firm-set land did banded foemen destroy me, —
Nay, but death and my doom were well contrived by Aigisthos,
Who, with my cursèd wife, at his own house bidding me welcome,
Fed me, and slew me, as one might slay an ox at the manger!
So, by a death most wretched, I died; and all my companions

Round me were slain off-hand, like white-toothed swine that are slaughtered
Thus, when some lordly man, abounding in power and riches,
Orders a wedding-feast, or a frolic, or mighty carousal.
Thou indeed hast witnessed the slaughter of numberless heroes
Massacred, one by one, in the battle's heat; but with pity
All thy heart had been full, if thou hadst seen what I tell thee,—
How in the hall we lay among the wine-jars, and under
Tables laden with food; and how the pavement, on all sides,
Swam with blood! And I heard the dolorous cry of Kassandra,
Priam's daughter, whom treacherous Klytaimnestra anear me
Slew; and upon the ground I fell in my death-throes, vainly
Reaching out hands to my sword, while the shameless woman departed,
Nor did she even stay to press her hands on my eyelids,
No, nor to close my mouth, although I was passing to Hades.
O, there is naught more dire, more insolent than a woman
After the very thought of deeds like these has possessed her,—
One who would dare to devise an act so utterly shameless,
Lying in wait to slay her wedded lord. I bethought me,
Verily, home to my children and servants giving me welcome
Safe to return; but she has wrought for herself confusion,
Plotting these grievous woes, and for other women hereafter,
Even for those, in sooth, whose thoughts are set upon goodness."
Thus he spake, and I, in turn replying, adressed him:
"Heavens! how from the first has Zeus the thunderer hated,

All for the women's wiles, the brood of Atreus! What numbers
Perished in quest of Helen, — and Klytaimnestra, the meanwhile,
Wrought in her soul this guile for thee afar on thy journey."
Thus I spake, and he, replying, said to me straightway:
"See that thou art not, then, like me too mild to thy helpmeet;
Nor to her ear reveal each secret matter thou knowest,
Tell her the part, forsooth, and see that the rest shall be hidden.
Nathless, not unto thee will come such murder, Odysseus,
Dealt by a wife; for wise indeed, and true in her purpose,
Noble Penelope is, the child of Ikarios. Truly,
She it was whom we left, a fair young bride, when we started
Off for the wars; and then an infant lay at her bosom,
One who now, methinks, in the list of men must be seated, —
Blest indeed! ah, yes, for his well-loved father, returning,
Him shall behold, and the son shall clasp the sire, as is fitting.
Not unto me to feast my eyes with the sight of my offspring
Granted the wife of my bosom, but first of life she bereft me.
Therefore I say, moreover, and charge thee well to remember,
Unto thine own dear land steer thou thy vessel in secret,
Not in the light; since faith can be placed in woman no longer."

II. THE DEATH OF AGAMEMNON

FROM AISCHYLOS

I

[AISCHYLOS, *Agamemnon*, 1266–1318.[1]]

CHORUS — KASSANDRA — AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS.

O WRETCHED woman indeed, and O most wise,
Much hast thou said; but if thou knowest well
Thy doom, why, like a heifer, by the Gods
Led to the altar, tread so brave of soul?

KASSANDRA.

There's no escape, O friends, the time is full.

CHORUS.

Nathless, the last to enter gains in time.

KASSANDRA.

The day has come; little I make by flight.

CHORUS.

Thou art bold indeed, and of a daring spirit!

KASSANDRA.

Such sayings from the happy none hath heard.

CHORUS.

Grandly to die is still a grace to mortals.

KASSANDRA.

Alas, my sire, — thee and thy noble brood!

(*She starts back from the entrance.*)

[1] Text of Paley.

CHORUS.

How now? What horror turns thee back again?

KASSANDRA.

Faugh! faugh!

CHORUS.

Why such a cry? There 's something chills thy soul!

KASSANDRA.

The halls breathe murder, — ay, they drip with blood.

CHORUS.

How? 'T is the smell of victims at the hearth.

KASSANDRA.

Nay, but the exhalation of the tomb!

CHORUS.

No Syrian dainty, this, of which thou speakest.

KASSANDRA (*at the portal*).

Yet will I in the palace wail my own
And Agamemnon's fate! Enough of life!
Alas! O friends!
Yet not for naught I quail, not as a bird
Snared in the bush: bear witness, though I die,
A woman's slaughter shall requite my own,
And, for this man ill-yoked, a man shall fall!
Thus prays of you a stranger, at death's door.

CHORUS.

Lost one, I rue with thee thy foretold doom!

KASSANDRA.

Once more I fain would utter words, once more, —
'T is my own threne! And I invoke the Sun,

By his last beam, that my detested foes
May pay no less to them who shall avenge me,
Than I who die an unresisting slave!

(*She enters the palace.*)

CHORUS.

Of Fortune was never yet enow
To mortal man; and no one ever
Her presence from his house would sever
And point, and say, "Come no more nigh!"
Unto our King granted the Gods on high
That Priam's towers should bow,
And homeward, crowned of Heaven, hath he come;
But now if, for the ancestral blood that lay
At his doors, he falls, — and the dead, that cursed his home,
He, dying, must in full requite, —
What manner of man is one that would not pray
To be born with a good attendant Sprite?

(*An outcry within the palace.*)

AGAMEMNON.

Woe's me! I am stricken a deadly blow within!

CHORUS.

Hark! Who is 't cries "a blow"? Who meets his death?

AGAMEMNON.

Woe's me! again! a second time I am stricken!

CHORUS.

The deed, methinks, from the King's cry, is done.
Quick, let us see what help may be in counsel!

2.

[*Agamemnon*, 1343–1377.]

Enter KLYTAIMNESTRA, *from the Palace.*

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Now, all this formal outcry having vent,
I shall not blush to speak the opposite.
How should one, plotting evil things for foes,
Encompass seeming friends with such a bane
Of toils? it were a height too great to leap?
Not without full prevision came, though late,
To me this crisis of an ancient feud.
And here, the deed being done, I stand — even where
I smote him! nor deny that thus I did it,
So that he could not flee nor ward off doom.
A seamless net, as round a fish, I cast
About him, yea, a deadly wealth of robe;
Then smote him twice; and with a double cry
He loosed his limbs; and to him fallen I gave
Yet a third thrust, a grace to Hades, lord
Of the underworld and guardian of the dead.
So, falling, out he gasps his soul, and out
He spurts a sudden jet of blood, that smites
Me with a sable rain of gory dew, —
Me, then no less exulting than the field
In the sky's gift, while bursts the pregnant ear!
Things being thus, old men of Argos, joy,
If joy ye can; — I glory in the deed!
And if 't were seemly ever yet to pour
Libation to the dead, 't were most so now;
Most meet that one, who poured for his own home
A cup of ills, returning, thus should drain it!

CHORUS.

Shame on thy tongue! how bold of mouth thou art
That vauntest such a speech above thy husband!

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Ye try me as a woman loose of soul;
But I with dauntless heart avow to you
Well knowing — and whether ye choose to praise or blame
I care not — this is Agamemnon; yea,
My husband; yea, a corpse, of this right hand,
This craftsman sure, the handiwork! Thus stands it.

3

[*Agamemnon*, 1466–1507.]

CHORUS — SEMI-CHORUS — KLYTAIMNESTRA

CHORUS.

Woe! Woe!
King! O how shall I weep for thy dying?
What shall my fond heart say anew?
Thou in the web of the spider art lying,
Breathing out life by a death she shall rue.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Alas! alas for this slavish couch! By a sword
Two-edged, by a hand untrue,
Thou art smitten, even to death, my lord!

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Thou sayest this deed was mine alone;
But I bid thee call me not
The wife of Agamemnon's bed;
'T was the ancient fell Alastor[1] of Atreus' throne,
The lord of a horrid feast, this crime begot,
Taking the shape that seemed the wife of the dead, —
His sure revenge, I wot,
A victim ripe hath claimed for the young that bled.

[1] The Evil Genius, the Avenger.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Who shall bear witness now, —
Who of this murder, now, thee guiltless hold?
How sayest thou? How?
Yet the fell Alastor may have holpen, I trow:
Still is dark Ares driven
Down currents manifold
Of kindred blood, wherever judgment is given,
And he comes to avenge the children slain of old,
And their thick gore cries to Heaven!

CHORUS.

Woe! Woe!
King! O how shall I weep for thy dying?
What shall my fond heart say anew?
Thou in the web of the spider art lying,
Breathing out life by a death she shall rue!

SEMI-CHORUS.

Alas! alas for this slavish couch! By a sword
Two-edged, by a hand untrue,
Thou art smitten, even to death, my lord!

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Hath he not subtle Atè brought
Himself, to his kingly halls?
'T was on our own dear offspring, — yea,
On Iphigeneia, wept for still, he wrought
The doom that cried for the doom by which he falls.
O, let him not in Hades boast, I say,
For 't is the sword that calls,
Even for that foul deed, his soul away!

PENELOPE

Not thus, Ulysses, with a tender word,
Pretence of state affairs, soft blandishment,
And halt assurances, canst thou evade
My heart's discernment. Think not such a film
Hath touched these aged eyes, to make them lose
The subtlest mood of those even now adroop,
Self-conscious, darkling from my nearer gaze.
Full well I know thy mind, O man of wiles!
O man of restless yearnings — fate impelled,
Fate-conquering — like a waif thrown back and forth
On many waters! Oft I see thee stand
At eve, a landmark on the outer cliff,
Looking far westward; later, when the feast
Smokes in the hall, and nimble servants pass
Great bowls of wine, and ancient Phemeus sings
The deeds of Peleus' son, thy right hand moves
Straight for its sword-hilt, like a ship for home;
Then, when thou hearest him follow in the song
Thine own miraculous sojourn of long years
Through stormy seas, weird islands, and the land
Of giants, and the gray companions smite
Their shields, and cry, *What do we longer here?*
Afloat! and let the great waves bear us on!
I know thou growest weary of the realm,
Thy wife, thy son, the people, and thy fame.

I too have had my longings. Am I not
Penelope, who when Ulysses came
To Sparta and Icarius bade her choose
Betwixt her sire and wooer, veiled her face
And stept upon the galley silver-oared,
And since hath kept thine Ithacensian halls?
Then when the hateful Helen fled to Troy
With Paris, and the Argive chieftains sailed

Their ships to Aulis, I would have thee go —
Presaging fame, and power, and spoils of war.
So ten years passed; meanwhile I reared thy son
To know his father's wisdom, and, apart
Among my maidens, wove the yellow wool.
But then, returning one by one, they came, —
The island princes; high-born dames of Crete
And Cephalonia saw again their lords;
Only Ulysses came not; yet the war
Was over, and his vessels, like a troop
Of cranes in file, had spread their wings for home.
More was unknown. Then many a winter's night
The servants piled great fagots, smeared with tar,
High on the palace-roof; with mine own hands
I fired the heaps, that, haply, far away
On the dark waters, might my lord take heart
And know the glory of his kingly towers.

So winter passed; and summer came and went,
And winter and another summer; then —
Alas, how many weary months and days!
But he I loved came not. Meanwhile thou knowest
Pelasgia's noblest chiefs, with kingly gifts
And pledges of dower, gathered in the halls;
But still this heart kept faithful, knowing yet
Thou wouldst return, though wrecked on alien shores.
And great Athenè often in my dreams
Shone, uttering words of cheer. But, last of all,
The people rose, swearing a king should rule,
To keep their ancient empery of the isles
Inviolate and thrifty: bade me choose
A mate, no longer dally. Then I prayed
Respite, until the web within my loom,
Of gold and purple curiously devised
For old Laertes' shroud should fall complete
From hands still faithful to his blood. Thou knowest
How like a ghost I left my couch at night,

Unravelling the labor of the day,
And warded off the fate, till came that time
When my lost sea-king thundered in his halls,
And with long arrows clove the suitors' hearts.
So constant was I! now not thirty moons
Go by, and thou forgettest all. Alas!
What profit is there any more in love?
What thankless sequel hath a woman's faith!

Yet if thou wilt,—in these thy golden years,
Safe-housed in royalty, like a god revered
By all the people,—if thou yearnest yet
Once more to dare the deep and Neptune's hate,
I will not linger in a widowed age;
I will not lose Ulysses, hardly found
After long vigils; but will cleave about
Thy neck, with more than woman's prayers and tears,
Until thou take me with thee. As I left
My sire, I leave my son, to follow where
Ulysses goeth, dearer for the strength
Of that great heart which ever drives him on
To large experience of newer toils!

Trust me, I will not any hindrance prove,
But, like Athenè's helm, a guiding star,
A glory and a comfort! O, be sure
My heart shall take its lesson from thine own!
My voice shall cheer the mariners at their oars
In the night watches; it shall warble songs,
Whose music shall outvie the luring airs
Of Nereïd or Siren. If we find
Those isles thou namest, where the golden fount
Gives youth to all who taste it, we will drink
Deep draughts, until the furrows leave thy brow,
And I shall walk in beauty, as when first
I saw thee from afar in Sparta's groves.
But if Charybdis seize our keel, or swift

ALECTRYON

Black currents bear us down the noisome wave
That leads to Hades, till the vessel sink
In Stygian waters, none the less our souls
Shall gain the farther shore, and, hand in hand,
Walk from the strand across Elysian fields,
'Mong happy thronging shades, that point and say:
"There go the great Ulysses, loved of gods,
And she, his wife, most faithful unto death!"

ALECTRYON

GREAT Arês, whose tempestuous godhood found
Delight in those thick-tangled solitudes
Of Hebrus-watered tracts of rugged Thrace, —
Great Arês, scouring the Odrysian wilds,
There met Alectryôn, a Thracian boy,
Stalwart beyond his years, and swift of foot
To hunt from morn till eve the white-toothed boar.
"What hero," said the war-God, "joined his blood
With that of Hæmian nymph, to make thy form
So fair, thy soul so daring, and thy thews
So lusty for the contest on the plains
Wherein the fleet Odrysæ tame their steeds?"

From that time forth the twain together chased
The boar, or made their coursers cleave the breadth
Of yellow Hebrus, and, through vales beyond,
Drove the hot leopard foaming to his lair.
And day by day Alectryôn dearer grew
To the God's restless spirit, till from Thrace
He bore him, even to Olympos; there
Before him set immortal food and wine,
That fairer youth and lustier strength might serve
His henchman; bade him bear his arms, and cleanse
The crimsoned burnish of his brazen car:
So dwelt the Thracian youth among the Gods.

There came a day when Arês left at rest
His spear, and smoothed his harmful, unhelmed brow,
Calling Alectryôn to his side, and said:
"The shadow of Olympos longer falls
Through misty valleys of the lower world;
The Earth shall be at peace a summer's night;
Men shall have calm, and the unconquered host
Peopling the walls of Troas, and the tribes
Of Greece, shall sleep sweet sleep upon their arms;
For Aphroditê, queen of light and love,
Awaits me, blooming in the House of Fire,
Girt with the cestus, infinite in grace,
Dearer than battle and the joy of war:
She, for whose charms I would renounce the sword
Forever, even godhood, would she wreathe
My brows with myrtle, dwelling far from Heaven.
Hêphaistos, the lame cuckold, unto whose
Misshapen squalor Zeus hath given my queen,
To-night seeks Lemnos, and his sooty vault
Roofed by the roaring surge; wherein, betimes,
He and his Cyclops pound the ringing iron,
Forging great bolts for Zeus, and welding mail,
White-hot, in shapes for Heroes and the Gods.
Do thou, Alectryôn, faithful to my trust,
Hie with me to the mystic House of Fire.
Therein, with wine and fruitage of her isle,
Sweet odors, and all rarest sights and sounds,
My Paphian mistress shall regale us twain.
But when the feast is over, and thou seest
Arês and Aphroditê pass beyond
The portals of that chamber whence all winds
Of love flow ever toward the fourfold Earth,
Watch by the entrance, sleepless, while we sleep;
And warn us ere the glimpses of the Dawn;
Lest Hêlios, the spy, may peer within
Our windows, and to Lemnos speed apace,

In envy clamoring to the hobbling smith,
Hêphaistos, of the wrong I do his bed."

Thus Arês; and the Thracian boy, well pleased,
Swore to be faithful to his trust, and liege
To her, the perfect queen of light and love.
So saying, they reached the fiery, brazen gates,
Encolumned high by Heaven's artisan,
Hêphaistos, rough, begrimed, and halt of foot, —
Yet unto whom was Aphroditê given
By Zeus, because from his misshapen hands
All shapely things found being; but the gift
Brought him no joyance, nor made pure his fame,
Like those devices which he wrought himself,
Grim, patient, unbeloved.

There passed they in
At portals of the high, celestial House,
And on beyond the starry-golden court,
Through amorous hidden ways, and winding paths
Set round with splendors, to the spangled hall
Of secret audience for noble guests.
Here Charis labored, so Hêphaistos bade,
Moulding the room's adornments; here she built
Low couches, framed in ivory, overlain
With skins of pard and panther, and the fleece
Of sheep which graze the low Hesperian isles;
And in the midst a cedarn table spread,
Whereon the loves of all the elder Gods
Were wrought in gold and silver; and the light
Of quenchless rubies sparkled over all.
Thus far came Arês and Alectryôn,
First leaving shield and falchion at the door,
That naught of violence should haunt that air
Serene, but laughter-loving peace, and joys
The meed of Gods, once given men to know.

Then, from her daïs in the utmost hall,
Shone toward them Aphroditê, not by firm,
Imperial footfalls, but in measureless
Procession, even as, wafted by her doves,
She kissed the faces of the yearning waves
From Cyprus to the high Thessalian mount,
Claiming her throne in Heaven; so light she stept,
Untended by her Graces; only he,
Erôs, th' eternal child, with welcomings
Sprang forward to Arês, like a beam of light
Flashed from a coming brightness, ere it comes;
And the ambrosial mother to his glee
Joined her own joy, coy as she glided near
Arês, till Arês closed her in his arms
An instant, with the perfect love of Gods.
And the wide chamber gleamed with their delight,
And infinite tinkling laughters rippled through
Far halls, wherefrom no boding echoes came.

But when the passion of their meeting fell
To dalliance, the mighty lovers, sunk
Within those ivory couches golden-fleeced,
Made wassail at the wondrous board, and held
Sweet stolen converse till the middle night.
And soulless servitors came gliding in,
Handmaidens, wrought of gold, the marvellous work
Of lame Hêphaistos; having neither will,
Nor voice, yet bearing on their golden trays
Lush fruits and Cyprian wine, and, intermixt,
Olympian food and nectar, earth with heaven.
These Erôs and Alectryôn took therefrom,
And placed before the lovers: and, meanwhile,
Melodious breathings from unfingered lutes,
Warblings from unseen nightingales, and songs
From lips uncrimsoned, scattered music round.
So fled the light-shod moments, hour by hour,
While the grim husband clanged upon his forge

In lurid caverns of the distant isle,
Unboding, and unheeded in his home,
Save with a scornful jest. Till now the crown
Of Artemis shone at her topmost height:
Then rose the impassioned lovers, with rapt eyes
Fixed each on each, and passed beyond the hall,
Through curtains of that chamber whence all winds
Of love flow ever toward the fourfold Earth;
At whose dim vestibule Alectryôn
Disposed him, mindful of his master's word;
But Erôs, heavy-eyed, long since had slept,
Deep-muffled in the softness of his plumes.
And all was silence in the House of Fire.

Only Alectryôn, through brazen bars,
Watched the blue East for Eôs, she whose torch
Should warn him of the coming of the Sun.
Even thus he kept his vigils; but, ere half
Her silvery downward path the Huntress knew,
His senses by that rich immortal food
Grew numbed with languor. Then the shadowy hall's
Deep columns glimmered, interblent with dreams,—
Thick forests, running waters, darkling caves
Of Thrace; and half in thought he grasped the bow;
Hunted once more within his native wilds,
Cheering the hounds; until before his eyes
The drapery of all nearer pictures fell,
And his limbs drooped. Whereat the imp of Sleep,
Hypnos, who hid him at the outer gate,
Slid in with silken-sandalled feet, and laid
A subtle finger on his lids. And so,
Crouched at the warder-post, Alectryôn slept.

Meanwhile the God and Goddess, recking nought
Of evil, trusting to the faithful boy,
Sank satiate in the calm of trancèd rest.
And past the sleeping warder, deep within

The portals of that chamber whence all winds
Of love flow ever toward the fourfold Earth,
Hypnos kept on, walking, yet half afloat
In the sweet air; and fluttering with cool wings
Above their couch fanned the reposeful pair
To slumber. Thus, a careless twilight hour,
Unknowing Eôs and her torch, they slept.

Ill-fated rest! Awake, ye fleet-winged Loves,
Your mistress! Eôs, rouse the sleeping God,
And warn him of the coming of the Day!
Alectryôn, wake! In vain: Eôs swept by,
Radiant, a blushing finger on her lips.
In vain! Close on her flight, from furthest East,
The peering Hêlios drove his lambent car,
Casting the tell-tale beams on earth and sky,
Until Olympos laughed within his light,
And all the House of Fire grew roofed with gold;
And through its brazen windows Hêlios gazed
Upon the sleeping lovers: thence away
To Lemnos flashed, across the rearward sea,
A messenger, from whom the vengeful smith,
Hêphaistos, learned the story of his wrongs;
Whence afterward rude scandal spread through Heaven.

But they, the lovers, startled from sweet sleep
By garish Day, stood timorous and mute,
Even as a regal pair, the hart and hind,
When first the keynote of the clarion horn
Pierces their covert, and the deep-mouthed hound
Bays, following on the trail; then, with small pause
For amorous partings, sped in diverse ways.
She, Aphroditê, clothed in pearly cloud,
Dropt from Olympos to the eastern shore;
Thence floated, half in shame, half laughter-pleased,
Southward across the blue Ægæan sea,
That had a thousand little dimpling smiles

At her discomfort, and a thousand eyes
To shoot irreverent glances. But her conch
Passed the Eubœan coasts, and softly on
By rugged Dêlos, and the gentler slope
Of Naxos, to Icarian waves serene;
Thence sailed betwixt fair Rhodos, on the left,
And windy Carpathos, until it touched
Cyprus; and soon the conscious Goddess found
Her bower in the hollow of the isle;
And wondering nymphs in their white arms received
Their white-armed mistress, bathing her fair limbs
In fragrant dews, twining her lucent hair
With roses, and with kisses soothing her;
Till, glowing in fresh loveliness, she sank
To stillness, tended in the sacred isle,
And hid herself awhile from all her peers.

But angry Arês faced the treacherous Morn,
Spurning the palace tower; nor looked behind,
Disdainful of himself and secret joys
That stript him to the laughter of the Gods.
Toward the East he made, and overhung
The broad Thermaic gulf; then, shunning well
The crags of Lemnos, by Mount Athôs stayed
A moment, mute; thence hurtled sheer away,
Across the murmuring Northern sea, whose waves
Are swollen in billows ruffled with the cuffs
Of endless winds; so reached the shores of Thrace,
And spleen pursued him in the tangled wilds.

Hither at eventide remorseful came
Alectryôn; but the indignant God,
With harsh revilings, changed him to the Cock,
That evermore, remembering his fault,
Heralds with warning voice the coming Day.

1863.

CRETE

Though Arkádi's shattered pile
Hides her dead without a dirge,
Lo! where still the mountain isle
Fronts the angry Moslem surge!
Hers, in old, heroic days,
Her unfettered heights afar
'Twixt the Grecian Gulf to raise,
And the torrid Libyan star.

From her bulwarks to the North
Stretched the glad Ægæan Sea,
Sending bards and warriors forth
To the triumphs of the free;
Ill the fierce invader throve,
When, from island or from main,
Side by side the Grecians strove:
Swift he sought his lair again!

Though the Cretan eagle fell,
And the ancient height were won,
Freedom's light was guarded well,—
Handed down from sire to son;
Through the centuries of shame,
Ah! it never wholly died,
But was hid, a sacred flame,
There on topmost Ida's side.

Shades of heroes Homer sung—
Wearing once her hundred crowns—
Rise with shadowy swords among
Candia's smoking fields and towns;
Not again their souls shall sleep,
Nor the crescent wane in peace,
Till from every island-keep
Shines the starry Cross of Greece.

NEWS FROM OLYMPIA[1]

Olympia? Yes, strange tidings from the city
Which pious mortals builded, stone by stone,
For those old gods of Hellas, half in pity
Of their storm-mantled height and dwelling lone,—
Their seat upon the mountain overhanging
Where Zeus withdrew behind the rolling cloud,
Where crowned Apollo sang, the phorminx twanging,
And at Poseidon's word the forests bowed.

Ay, but that fated day
When from the plain Olympia passed away;
When ceased the oracles, and long unwept
Amid their fanes the gods deserted fell,
While sacerdotal ages, as they slept,
The ruin covered well!

The pale Jew flung his cross, thus one has written,
Among them as they sat at the high feast,
And saw the gods, before that token smitten,
Fade slowly, while His presence still increased,
Until the seas Ionian and Ægæan
Gave out a cry that Pan himself was dead,
And all was still: thenceforth no more the pæan,
No more by men the prayer to Zeus was said.

Sank, like a falling star,
Hêphaistos in the Lemnian waters far;
The silvery Huntress fled the darkened sky;
Dim grew Athene's helm, Apollo's crown;
Alpheios' nymphs stood wan and trembling by
When Hera's fane went down.

[1] "One after the other the figures described by Pausanias are dragged from the earth. Niké has been found; the head of Kladeos is there; Myrtilos is announced, and Zeus will soon emerge. This is earnest of what may follow." — Dispatch to the London *Times*.

News! what news? Has it in truth then ended,
The term appointed for that wondrous sleep?
Has Earth so well her fairest brood defended
Within her bosom? Was their slumber deep
Not this our dreamless rest that knows no waking,
But that to which the years are as a day?
What! are they coming back, their prison breaking,—
These gods of Homer's chant, of Pindar's lay?

Are they coming back in might,
Olympia's gods, to claim their ancient right?
Shall then the sacred majesty of old,
The grace that holy was, the noble rage,
Temper our strife, abate our greed for gold,
Make fine the modern age?

Yes, they are coming back, to light returning!
Bold are the hearts and void of fear the hands
That toil, the lords of War and Spoil unurning,
Or of their sisters fair that break the bands;
That loose the sovran mistress of desire,
Queen Aphrodite, to possess the earth
Once more; that dare renew dread Hera's ire,
And rouse old Pan to wantonness of mirth.

The herald Niké, first,
From the dim resting-place unfettered burst,
Winged victor over fate and time and death!
Zeus follows next, and all his children then;
Phoibos awakes and draws a joyous breath,
And Love returns to men.

Ah, let them come, the glorious Immortals,
Rulers no more, but with mankind to dwell,
The dear companions of our hearts and portals,
Voiceless, unworshipped, yet beloved right well!

Pallas shall sit enthroned in wisdom's station,
Eros and Psyche be forever wed,
And still the primal loveliest creation
Yield new delight from ancient beauty bred.

Triumphant as of old,
Changeless while Art and Song their warrant hold,
The visions of our childhood haunt us still,
Still Hellas sways us with her charm supreme.
The morn is past, but Man has not the will
To banish yet the dream.

THE BLAMELESS PRINCE

THE BLAMELESS PRINCE

PRELUDE

Poet, wherefore hither bring
Old romance, while others sing
Sweeter idyls of to-day?
Why not picture in your lay
Western woods and waters grand,
Clouds and skies of this fair land?
Are there fairer far away?

I have many another song
Of those regions where belong,
First of all, my heart and home.
If for once my fancy roam,
Trust me, in the land I view
Falls the sunshine, falls the dew,
And the Spring and Summer come.

Why from yonder stubble glean
Ancient names of King and Queen,
Knightly men and maidens fair?
Are there in our time no rare
Beauteous women, heroes brave?
Is there naught this side the grave
Worth the dust you gather there?

Nay, but these were human too,
Strong or wayward, false or true.
Art will seek through every clime
For her picture or her rhyme;

Yes, nor looking far around,
But to-day I sought and found
These who lived in that old time.

Why should we again be told
Dross will mingle with all gold?
That which time nor test can stain
Was not smelted quite in vain.
What of Albert's blameless heart,
Arthur's old heroic part,
Saxon Alfred's glorious reign?

Yes, my Prince was such as they,
Part of gold, and part of clay,
Though his metal shone as bright,
And his dross was hid from sight.
He who brightest is, and best
Still may fear the secret test
That shall try his heart aright.

Let me, then, of what befell
Hearts that loved, my story tell.
Turn the leaf that lies between
You who listen and the scene!
Your pity for the Lady, since
She died of sorrow; spare my Prince;
Love to the last my gentle Queen!

THE BLAMELESS PRINCE

Long since, there was a Princess of the blood,
Sole heiress to the crown her father wore,—
Plucked from a dying stem, that one fair bud
Put forth, and withered ere it others bore;

And scarce the King her blossomed youth had seen,
When he, too, slept the sleep, and she was Queen.

Hers was a goodly realm, not stretched afar
In desert wilds by wolf and savage scoured,
But locked in generous limits, strong in war,
Serene in peace, with mountains walled and towered,
Fed by the tilth of many a fertile plain,
And veined with streams that proudly sought the main.

The open sea bore commerce to her marts,
Tumbling half round her borders with its tide;
Her vessels shot the surge; all noble arts
Of use and beauty in her towns were plied;
Her court was regal; lords and ladies lit
The palace with their graces and their wit.

Wise councillors devised each apt decree
That gained the potent sanction of her hand;
Great captains led her arms on shore and sea;
She was the darling of a loyal land;
Poets sang her praises, and in hut and hall
Her excellence was the discourse of all.

Her pride was suited to her high estate,
Her gentleness was equal with her youth,
Her wisdom in her goodness found its mate;
Her beauty was not that which brings to ruth
Men's lives, yet pure and luminous; — and fair
Her locks, and over all a sovereign air.

Without, she bore herself as rulers should,
Queenly in walk and gesture and attire;
Within, she nursed her flower of maidenhood,
Sweet girlish thoughts and virginal desire:

No woman's head so keen to work its will
But that the woman's heart is mistress still.

Three years she ruled a nation well content
To have a maiden queen; then came a day
When those on whom her councils chiefly leant
Began to speak of marriage, and to pray
Their sovereign not to hold herself alone,
Nor trust the tenure of an heirless throne; —

And then the people took the cry, nor lack
Was there of courtly suitors far or near, —
Kings, dukes, crown-princes, — swift upon the track,
Like huntsmen closing round a royal deer.
These she regarded not, but still, among
Her maids and missals, to her freedom clung.

And with the rest there came a puissant king,
Whose country pressed against her own domain, —
In strength its equal, but continuing
Its dearest foe through many a martial reign.
He sued to join his hand and realm with hers,
And end these wars; then all her ministers

Pleaded his suit; but, asking yet for grace,
And that her hand might wait upon her heart,
She halted, till the proud king turned his face
Homeward; and still the people, for their part,
Waited her choice, nor grudged her sex's share
Of coyness to a queen so young and fair.

There was a little State that nestled close
Beside her boundaries, as wont to claim,
Though free, protection there from outer foes,
A Principality — at least in name —
Whose ruler was her father's life-long friend
And firm ally, a statesman skilled to lend

Shrewd counsel, and who made, in days gone by,
A visit to this court, and with him led
His son, a gentle Prince, of years anigh
Her own, — twelve summers shone from either head;
And while their elders moved from place to place, —
The field-review, the audience, the chase, —

The Princess and the Prince, together thrown,
With their companions held a mimic court,
And with that sweet equality, the crown
Of Childhood, — which discovers in its sport
No barriers of rank or wealth or power, —
He named himself her consort. From that hour

The mindful Princess never quite forgot
Those joyous days, nor him, the fair-haired Prince;
And though she well had learned her greater lot,
And haply from his thought had passed long since
Her girlish image, chance, that moves between
Two courts, had brought his portrait to the Queen.

This from her cabinet she took one morn,
When they still urged the suit of that old king,
And said, half jesting, with a pretty scorn,
"Why mate your wilful Queen with mouldering
And crabbed Age? Now were he shaped like this,
With such a face, he were not so amiss.

"Queens are but women; 't is a sickly year
That couples frost and thaw, our minstrels sing." —
"Ho!" thought the graybeards, "sets the wind so near?"
And thought again: "Why not? the schemeful king
Perchance would rule us where he should be ruled;
A humbler consort will be sooner schooled."

Forewarned are those whom Fortune's gifts await.
Ere waned a moon the elder prince had learned —

From half the weathercocks which gilt the state,
  Spying the wind and shifting where it turned —
That for love's simple sake his son could gain
The world's chief prize, which kings had sought in vain.

How could he choose but clutch it? Yet the son
  Seemed worthy, for his parts were of that mould
Oft-failing Nature strives to join in one,
  And shape a hero, — pure and wise and bold:
In arts and arms the wonder of his peers,
The flower of princes, prince of cavaliers;

Tall, lithe of form, and of a Northern mien,
  Gentle in speech and thought, — while thus he shone,
A rising star, though chosen of a queen,
  Why seek the skies less tranquil than his own?
Why should he climb beside her perilous height,
And in that noonday blaze eclipse his light?

Ah, why? — one's own life may be bravely led,
  But not another's. Yet, as to and fro
The buzzing private embassies were sped,
  And when the Queen's own pages, bowing low,
Told in his ear a sweet and secret story,
The Prince, long trained to seek his house's glory,

Let every gracious sentence seem a plume
  Of love and beckoning beauty for his helm.
So passed a season; then the cannon's boom
  And belfry's peal delivered to the realm
The Queen's betrothal, and the councils met,
And for the nuptial rites a day was set.

Now when the time grew ripe, the favored Prince
  Rides forth, and through the little towns that mourn

His loss, and past the boundaries; and, since
To ape the pomp to which he was not born
Seemed in his soul a foolish thing and vain,
A few near comrades, only, made his train.

Nor pressed the populace along the ways;
But — for he wished it so — unheralded
He rode from post to post through many days,
Yet gained a greatness as the distance fled,
As some dim comet, drawing near its bound,
Takes lustre from the orb it courses round.

And league by league his fantasies outran
His progress, brooding on his mistress' power,
Until his own estate the while began
To seem of lesser worth each passing hour;
And with misdoubt this fortune weighed him down,
As though a splendid mantle had been thrown

About him, which he knew not well to wear,
And might not forfeit. Yet he spurred apace,
And reached a country-seat that bordered near
The Capital. Here, for a little space,
He was to rest from travel, and await
His day of entrance at the city's gate.

Upon these grounds a gray-haired noble dwelt,
A ribboned courtier of the former reign;
A tedious proper man, who glibly knelt
To royalty, — this ancient chamberlain, —
Yoked with a girlish wife, and, for the rest,
Proud of the charge that made a prince his guest.

The highway ran beside a greenwood keep
That reached, herefrom, quite to the city's edge;
Across, the fields with golden corn were deep;
The level sunset pierced the wayside hedge;

The banks were all abloom; a pheasant whirred
Far in the bush; anon, some tuneful bird

Broke into song, or, from a covert dark,
A bounding deer its dappled haunches showed
As though it heard the stag-hound's distant bark.
The wistful Prince with loitering purpose bode,
And thought how good it were to spend one's life
Far off from men, nor jostled with their strife.

Even as he mused he saw his host ahead,
Speeding to welcome him, in lordly wont,
And all the household in a line bestead;
And lightly with that escort, at the front,
A peerless woman rode across the green;
Then the Prince thought, "It surely is the Queen,

Who comes to meet me of her loving grace!"
And his blood mounted; but he knew how fair
The royal locks, and, when she neared his place,
He saw the lady's prodigal dark hair
And wondrous loveliness were wide apart
From the sweet, tranquil picture next his heart.

And when the chamberlain, with halted suit,
Made reverence, and was answered courteous-wise,
The lady to her knightly guest's salute
Turned her face full, so that he marked her eyes, —
How dewy gray beneath each long, black lid,
And danger somewhere in their light lay hid.

There are some natures housed so chaste within
Their placid dwellings that their heads control
The tumult of their hearts; and thus they win
A quittance from this pleading of the soul
For Love, whose service does so wound and heal;
How should they crave for what they cannot feel?

From passion and from pain enfranchised quite,
Alike from gain and never-stanched Regret,
Calm as the blind who have not seen the light,
The dumb who hear no precious voice; and yet
The sun forever pours his lambent fire
And the high winds are vocal with desire.

And there are those whose fervent souls are wed
To glorious bodies, panoplied for love,
Born to hear sweetest words that can be said,
To give and gather kisses, and to move
All men with longing after them,—to know
What flowers of paradise for lovers grow.

The Vestal, with her silvery content,
The Lesbian, with the passion and the pain,—
Which creature hath their one Creator lent
More light of heaven? Who would dare restrain
The beams of either? who the radiance mar
Of the white planet or the burning star?

If in its innocence a life is bound
With cords that thrall its birthright and design,
Let those whose hands the evil meshes wound
Pray that it cast no look beyond their line;
That no strong voice too late may enter in
Its prison-range, to teach what might have been.

Was there no conscious spirit thus to plead
For this bright lady, as the wondering guest
Closed with his welcomers, and each took heed
Of each, and horse to horse they rode abreast,
Nearing a fair and spacious house that stood,
Half hidden, in the edges of the wood?

And while, the last court-tidings running o'er,
Their talk on this and that at random fell,

And the trains joined behind, the lady bore
Her beauteous head askance, yet wist full well
How the Prince looked and spoke; unwittingly,
With the strange female sense and secret eye,

Made of him there her subtle estimate,
Forecast his lot, and thought how all things flow
To those who have a surfeit. Could the great,
The perfect Queen, she marvelled, truly know
And love him at his value? In his turn,
He read her face as 't were a marble urn

Embossed with Truth and blushful Innocence,
Yet with the wild Loves carven in repose;
And as he looked he felt, and knew not whence,
A thought like this come as the wind that blows:
"A face to lose one's life for; aye, and more,
To live for!" — So they reached the sculptured door

And casements gilded with the dying light.
That eve the host spread out a stately board,
And with his household far into the night
Feasted the Prince. The lady, next her lord,
Drooped like a musk-rose trained beside a tomb.
Loath was the guest that night to seek his room.

Ah! wherefore tell again an oft-told tale, —
That of the sleeping knight who lost his wage
In the enchanted land, though cased with mail,
And bore the sacred shrine an empty gage?
How this thing went it were not worth to view
But for the triple coil which thence outgrew;

How, with the morn, the ancient chamberlain
Made off, and on the marriage business moved;

How day by day those young hearts fed amain
Upon the food of lovers, till — they loved.
Beneath the mists of duty and degree
A warmth of passion crept deliciously

About the twain; and there, within the gleam
Of those gray languid eyes, his nearing fate
Seemed to the one a far, unquiet dream.
So when the heralds said, "All things await
Your princely coming," the glad summons broke
Upon him like a harsh bell's jangling stroke,

And waked him, and he knew he must be gone
And put that honeyed chalice quite away;
Yet once more met the lady, and alone,
It chanced, within the grounds. The two, that day,
Lured by a falling water's sound, went deep
Beyond the sunlight, in the forest-keep.

Here from a range of wooded uplands leapt
A mountain brook and far-off meadows sought;
Now under firs and tasselled chestnuts crept,
Then on through jagged rocks a passage fought,
Until it clove this shadowy gorge and cool
In one white cataract, — with a dark, broad pool

Beneath, the home of mottled trout. One side
Rose the cliff's hollowed height, and overhung
An open sward across that basin wide.
The liberal sun through slanting larches flung
Rich spots of gold upon the tufted ground,
And the great royal forest gloomed around.

The Prince, divided from the world so far,
Sat with the lady on a fallen tree;
They looked like lovers, yet a prison-bar
Between them had not made the two less free.

Only their eyes told what they could not say,
For still their lips spoke alien words that day.

She told a legend of an early king
  Who knew the fairy of this wildwood glen,
And often sought her haunt, far off to fling
  His grandeur, and be loved like common men.
He died long since, the lady said; but she,
Who could not die, how weary she must be!

They talked of the strange beauty of the spot,
  The light that glinted through the ancient trees,
Their own young lives, the Prince's future lot;
  Then jested with false laughs. Like tangled bees,
Each other and themselves they sweetly stung;
They sung fond songs, and mocked the words they sung.

At last he hung his picture by a chain
  About her neck, and on it graved the date.
Her merry eyes grew soft with tender pain;
  She heard him sigh, "Alas, by what rude fate
Our lives, like ships at sea, an instant meet,
Then part forever on their courses fleet!"

And in sheer pity of herself she dropped
  Her lovely head; and, though with self she strove,
One hot tear fell. The shadow, which had stopped
  On her life's dial, moved again, and Love
Went sobbing by, and only left his wraith;
For both were loyal to their given faith.

Farewells they breathed and self-reproaches found,
  Half gliding with the current to the fall,
Yet struggling for the shore. Was she not bound?
  Did not his plighted future, like a wall,
Jut 'cross the stream? They feared themselves, and rose,
And through the forest gained the mansion-close

Unmissed, and parted thus, nor met anew;
For on the morrow, when the Prince took horse,
The lady feigned an illness, or 't was true, —
Yet maybe from her oriel marked his course,
Watching his plume, that into distance past,
Like some dear sail which sinks from sight at last.

He rode beneath their arch, where pennons flared
And standards with his colors blazoned in.
Then thousands shouted welcome; trumpets blared;
He felt the glories of his life begin!
Far, far behind, that eddy in its stream
Now seemed; its vanished shores, in turn, a dream.

Enough; he passed the ways and reached the Queen.
With pomp and pageantry the vows were said.
Leave to the chroniclers the storied scene,
The church, the court, the masks and jousts that sped;
Not theirs, but ours, to follow Love apart,
Where first the bridegroom held his bride to heart,

And saw her purity and regnant worth
Thus kept for him and yielded to his care.
What marvel that of all who dwelt on earth
He seemed most fortunate and she most fair
That self-same hour? And "By God's grace," he thought,
"May I to some ignoble end be brought,

"Unless I so reward her for her choice,
And shape my future conduct in this land
By her deserving, that the world's great voice
Proclaim me not unworthy! Let my hand
Henceforward make her tasks its own; my life
Be merged in this fair ruler, precious wife,

"The paragon and glory of her kind!"
Who reads his own heart will not think it strange

He put that yester romance from his mind
So readily. Men's lives, like oceans, change
In shifting tides, and ebb from either shore
Till the strong planet draws them on once more.

And as a pilgrim, shielded by the wings
Of some bright angel, crosses perilous ground,
Through unknown ways, and, while she leads and sings,
Forgets the past, nor sees what pits surround
His footsteps, so the young Prince cast away
That self-distrust, and with his sovereign May

The gladness joined, and with her sat in state
Beneath the ancient scutcheons of her throne,
And welcome gave, and led the revels late;
But when the still and midnight heavens shone
They fled the masquers, and the city's hum
Was silent, and the palace halls grew dumb,

And Love and Sleep in that serene eclipse
Moved, making prince and clown of one degree,
Then was she all his own; then from her lips
He learned with what a sweet humility
She, whose least word a spacious kingdom ruled,
In Love's free vassalage would fain be schooled.

How poor, she said, her sovereignty seemed,
Unless it made her richer in his eye!
And poor his life, until her sunlight beamed
Upon it, said the Prince. So months went by;
They were a gracious pair; the Queen was glad;
Peace smiled, and the wide land contentment had.

And for a time the courteous welcome paid
The chosen consort, and the people's joy

In the Queen's joy, kept silent those who weighed
The Prince's make, and sought to find alloy
In his fine gold; but, when the freshness fled
From these things told, some took new thought and said:

"Look at the Queen: her heart is wholly set
Upon the Prince! what if he warp her mind
To errant policies, and rule us yet
By proxy?" "What and if he prove the kind
Of trifling gallant," others said, "to slight
Our mistress, for each new and base delight?

"Ay, we will watch him, lest he do her wrong!"
And his due station, even from the first,
The peers of haughty rank and lineage long,
Jealous of one whose blossom at a burst
Outflamed their own, begrudged him; till their pique
Grew plain, and sent proud color to his cheek.

So now he fared as some new actor fares,
Who through dark arras gains the open boards,
Facing the lights, and feels a thousand stares
Come full upon him; and the great throng hoards
Its plaudits; and, as he begins his tale,
His rivals wait to mock him if he fail.

But here a brave simplicity of soul
And careless vigilance, by honor bred,
Stayed him, and o'er his actions held control.
A host of generous virtues stood in stead,
To help him on; with patient manliness
He kept his rank, no greater and no less;

His life was as a limpid rivulet;
His thoughts, like golden sands, were through it seen,
Not on himself in poor ambition set,
But on his chosen country and the Queen;

And with such gentle tact he bore a sense
Of conduct due, nor took nor gave offence,

That, as time went, he earned their trust, who first
  Withheld it him, and brought them, one by one,
To seek him for a comrade; but he nursed
  His friendships with such equal care that none
Could claim him as their own; nor was his word
Of counsel dulled by being often heard;

Nor would he sully his fresh youth among
  The roisterers and pretty wanton dames
Who strove to win him; nor with ribald tongue
  Joined in the talk that round a palace flames;
Nor came and went alone, save — 't was his wont
In his own land — he haply left the hunt

On forest days, and, plunging down the wood,
  There in the brakes and copses half forgot
The part he bore, and caught anew the mood
  Of youth, and felt a heart for any lot;
Then, loitering cityward behind the train,
With fresher courage took his place again.

His pure life made the wits about the court
  Find in its very blamelessness a fault
That lacked the generous failings of their sort.
  "With so much sweet," they swore, "a grain of salt
Were welcome! lighter tongue and freer mood
Were something more of man, if less of prude!"

And others to his praises would oppose
  Suspicion of his prowess, and they said,
"Our rose of princes is a thornless rose,
  A woman's toy!" and, when the months were sped,
And the glad Queen was childed with a son,
Light jests upon his mission well begun

They bandied; yet the Prince, who felt the sting,
Bided his time. Till on the land there brake
A sudden warfare; for that haughty king,
Gathering a mighty armament to take
Revenge for his lost suit, with sword and flame
Against the borders on short pretext came.

Then with hot haste the Queen's whole forces poured
To meet him. With the call to horse and blade
The Prince, deep-chafed in spirit, placed his sword
At orders of the General, and prayed
A humble station, but, as due his rank,
Next in command was made, and led the flank.

And so with doubtful poise a fierce war raged,
Till on a day encountered face to face
The two chief hosts, and dreadful battle waged
To close the issue. In its opening space
Death smote the General, and in tumult sore
The line sank back; but swiftly, at the fore

Placing himself, the Prince right onward hurled
The strife once more, and with his battle-shout
Woke victory; again his forces whirled
The hostile troops, and drove them on in rout.
The strength of ten battalions seemed to yield
Before his arm; and so he won that field,

And slew with his own hand the vengeful king,
And with that death-stroke brought the war to end,
Conquering the common foe, and conquering
The hate, from which he would not else defend
His clear renown than with such manful deeds
As fall to faith and valor at their needs.

Again — this time the chaplet was his own —
The people wreathed their laurels for his brow;

His horses trod on flowers; the city shone
With flags of victory; and none but now —
As with no vaunting mien he wore his bays, —
Confessed him brave as good, and gave their praise.

PEACE smiled anew; the kingdom was at rest.
Ah, happy Queen! whom every matron's tongue
Ran envious of, with such a consort blest
As wins the heart of women, old and young;
So gallant, yet so good, the gentlest maid
By this fair standard her own suitor weighed.

I hold the perfect mating of two souls,
Through wedded love, to be the sum of bliss.
When Earth, this fruit that ripens as it rolls
In sunlight, grows more prime, lives will not miss
Their counterparts, and each shall find its own;
But now with what blind chance the lots are thrown!

And because Love sets with a rising tide
Along the drift where much has gone before
One holds of worth, — we lavish first, beside,
Heart, honors, regal gifts, and love the more
When yielding most, — for this the Queen's love knew
No slack, but still its current deeper grew.

And because Love is free, and follows not
On gratitude, nor comes from what is given
So much as on the giving; and, I wot,
Partly because it irks one to have thriven
At hands which seem the weaker, and should thrive
While those of him they cling to lift and strive;

And partly that his marriage seemed a height
Which raised him from the passions of our kind,

Nor with his own intent; and that, despite
  Its clear repose, he somehow longed to find
The lower world, starve, hunger, and be fed
With joy and sorrow, sweet and bitter bread, —

For all these things the Prince loved not the Queen
  With that sufficience which alone can take
A rapture in itself and rest serene;
  Yet knew not what his life lacked that should make
It worth to live, — our custom has such art
To dull the craving of the famished heart, —

Perchance had never known it, but a light
  Flashed in his path and lit a fiery train
About him; else, day following day, and night
  By night, through years his soul had felt no pain,
No triumph, but had shared the common lull,
Been all it seemed, as blameless, true, and dull.

And yet in one fair woman beauty, youth,
  And passion were united, and her love
Was framed about his likeness. Some, forsooth,
  May shift their changeful worship as they rove,
Or clowns or princes; but her fancy slept,
Dreaming upon that picture which she kept,

A secret pain and pleasance. With what strife
  Men sought her love she wist not, for the prize
Was not for them. She lived a duteous life.
  'T was something thus to let her constant eyes
Feed on his face, to hear his name, — to know
He lived, had walked those paths, had loved her so.

There is a painting of a youthful monk
  Who sits within a walled and cloistered nook,
His breviary closed, and listens, sunk
  In day-dreams, to a viol, — with a look

Of strange regret fixed on two pairing doves,
Who find their fate and simple natural loves.

Yet bonds of gold, linked hands, and chancel vows,
Even spousal beds, do not a marriage make.
When such things chain the soul that never knows
Love's mating, little vantage shall it take,
Wandering with alien feet throughout the wide,
Hushed temple, over those who pine outside!

So this young wife forecast her horoscope
And found its wedded lines of little worth,
Yet owned not to herself what hopeless hope
Or dumb intent made green her spot of earth.
So passed three changeless years, as such years be;
At last the old lord died, and left her free,

The mistress of his rank and broad estate,
In honor of her constancy. Then life
Rushed back; she saw her beauty grown more great,
Ripened as if a summer field were rife
With grain, the harvester neglectful, since
Hers was no mean desire that sought a prince,

Eager to make his birth and bloom her own,
Or reign a wanton favorite. But she thought,
"I might have loved and clung to him alone,
Am fairer than he knew me; yet, if aught
Of rarity make sweet my hair and lips,
What sweetness hath the honey that none sips?"

After her time of mourning she grew bold,
And said, "Once let me look upon his face!
The Queen will take no harm if I behold
What all the world can see." She left her place,
And with a kinsman, at a palace rout,
Followed the long line passing in and out

Before the dais. The Prince's eyes and hers
Met like the clouds that lighten. In a breath
Swift memory flamed between them, as, when stirs
No wind, and the dark sky is still as death,
One lance of living fire is hurled across;
Then comes the whirlwind, and the forests toss!

Yet as she bent her beauteous shoulders down,
And heard the kindly greeting of the Queen,
He spoke such words as one who wears a crown
Speaks, and no more; and with a low, proud mien
She murmured answer, from the presence past
Lightly, nor any look behind her cast.

In that first glimpse each read the other's heart;
But not without a summoning of himself
To judgment did the Prince forever part
From truth and fealty. As he pondered, still
With stronger voice Love claimed a debt unpaid,
And youth's hot pulses would not be gainsaid.

She with a fierce, full gladness saw again
Their broken threads of love begin to spin
In one red strand, and let it guide her then,
Whether it led to danger or to sin;
And shortly, on the morrow, took the road,
And gained her country-seat, and there abode.

The Prince, a bright near morning, mounted horse
Garbed for the hunt, and left the town, and through
The deep-pathed wood rode on a wayward course,
With a set purpose in him, — though he knew
It not, and let his steed go where it might;
For this sole thought pursued him since that night: —

"What recompense for me who have not sown
The seed and reaped the harvest of my days?

Youth passes like a bird; but love alone
Makes wealth of riches, power of rank, men's praise
A goodly sound. Of such things have I aught?
There is a foil to make their substance naught.

"What were his gifts who made each lovely thing,
Yet lacked the gift of love? or what the fame
Of some dwarfed poet, whose numbers still we sing,
If no fair woman trembled where he came?
The beggar dying in ditch is not accurst
If love once crowned him! Fate may do her worst.

"For Age that erst had drawn the wine of love
And filled its birth-cup to the jewelled brim,
And, while it sparkled, held it high above,
And drained it slowly, swiftly, — then, though dim
Grow the blurred eyes, and comfort and desire
Are but the ashes of their ancient fire,

"Yet will it bide its exit in content,
Remembering the past, nor grudge, with hoar
And ravenous look, the youth we have not spent.
No earthly sting has power to harm it more;
It lived and loved, was young, and now is old,
And life is rounded like a ring of gold."

Thereat with sudden rein the Prince wheeled horse,
And sought a pathway that he long had known
Yet shunned till now. Beside a watercourse
It led him for a winding league and lone;
Then made a rugged circuit, — where the brook
Down a steep ledge of rock its plunges took, —

And ended at an open sward, the same
Against whose edge the leaping cataract fell
From those high cliffs. Five years ago he came
To bury youth and love within that dell,

And, as again he reached the spot he sought,
Truth, fame, his child, the Queen, were all as naught.

Dismounting then, he pushed afoot, between
The alder saplings, to the outer wood,
The grounds, the garden-walks, and found, unseen,
A private door, nor tarried till he stood
Within the threshold of my Lady's room, —
A shadowed nook, all stillness and perfume.

Jasmine and briony the lattice climbed,
The rose and honeysuckle trailed above;
'T was such an hour as poets oft have rhymed,
And such a chamber as all lovers love.
He found her there, and at her footstool knelt.
Each in the other's fancies had so dwelt,

That, as one sees for days a sweet strange face,
Until at night in dreams he does caress
Its owner, and next morning in some place
Meets her, and wonders if she too can guess
How near and known he thinks her, — in this wise
They read one story in each other's eyes.

Her thick hair falling from its lilies hid
Their first long kiss of passion and content.
He heard her soft, glad murmur, as she slid
Within his hold, and 'gainst his bosom leant,
Whispering: "At last! at last! the years were sore."
"Their spite," he said, "shall do us wrong no more!"

What else, when mingled longings swell full-tide,
And the heart's surges leap their bounds for aye,
And fell the landmarks? What but fate defied,
Time clutched, and any future held at bay?
They recked not of the thorn, but seized the flower;
For all the sin, their joy was great that hour.

And since, for all the joy, theirs was a sin
That baned them with one bane; since many men
Had sought her love, but one alone could win
That largess, with his blameless life till then
Inviolate, — they bargained for love's sake
No severance of their covert league to make.

Yet, since nobility compelled them still,
They pledged themselves for honor's sake to hold
This hidden unto death; at either's will
To meet and part in secret; to infold
In their own hearts their trespass and delight,
Nor look their love, but guard it day or night.

So fell the blameless Prince. That day more late
Than wont he reached the presence of the Queen,
Deep in a palace chamber, where she sate
Fondling his child. The sunset lit her mien,
And made a saintly glory in her hair;
An awe came on him as he saw her there.

And, because perfect love suspecteth not,
She found no blot upon his brow. 'T was good
To take a pleasure in her wedded lot,
And watch the infant creeping where he stood;
And, as he bent his head, she little wist
What kisses burned upon the lips she kissed.

And he, still kind and wise in his decline,
Seeing her trustful calm, had little heart
To shake it. So his conduct gave no sign
Of broken faith; no slurring of his part
Betrayed him to the courtiers or the wife.
Perhaps a second spring-time in his life

Waxed green, and fresh-bloomed love renewed again
The joys that light our youth and leave our prime,
And women found him tenderer, and men
A blither, heartier comrade; but, meantime,
What hidden gladness made his visage bright
They could not guess; nor with what craft and sleight

The paramours, in fealty to that Love
Who laughs at locks and walks in hooded guise,
Met here and there, yet made no careless move
Nor bared their strategy to cunning eyes.
And though, a portion of the winter year,
The Queen's own summons brought her rival near

The Prince, among the ladies of her train,
Then, meeting face to face at morn and night,
They were as strangers. If it was a pain
To pass so coldly on, in love's despite,
It was a joy to hear each other's tone,
And keep the life-long secret still their own.

Once having dipped their palms they drank full draught,
And, like the desert-parched, alone at first
Felt the delight of drinking, while they quaffed
As if the waters could not slake their thirst;
That nicer sense unreached, when down we fling,
And view the oasis around the spring.

And, in that first bewilderment, perchance
The Prince's lapse had caught some peering eye,
But that his long repute, and maintenance
Against each test, had put suspicion by.
Now no one watched or doubted him. So long
His inner strength had made his outwork strong,

So long had smoothed his face, 't was light to take,
From what had been his blamelessness, a mask.

And still, for honor's and the country's sake,
He set his hands to every noble task;
Held firmly yet his place among the great,
Won by the sword and saviour of the state;

And as in war, so now in civic peace,
He led the people on to higher things,
And fostered Art and Song, and brought increase
Of Knowledge, gave to Commerce broader wings,
And with his action strengthened fourfold more
The weight his precept in their councils bore.

Then as the mellow years their fruitage brought,
And fair strong children made secure the throne,
He reared them wisely, heedfully; and sought
Their good, the Queen's desire, and these alone.
Himself so pure, that fathers bade their sons,
"Observe the Prince, who every license shuns;

"Who, being most brave, is purest!" Wedded wives,
Happy themselves, the Queen still happiest found,
And plighted maids still wished their lovers' lives
Conformed to his. Such manhood wrapt him round,
So winsome were his grace and knightly look,
The dames at court their lesser spoil forsook,

And wove a net to snare him, and their mood
Grew warmer for his coldness; and the hearts
Of those most heartless beat with quicker blood,
Foiled of his love; yet, heedless of their arts,
Courteous to all, he went his way content,
Nor ever from his princely station bent.

"What is this charm," they asked, "that makes him chaste
Beyond all men?" and wist not what they said.

The common folk, — because the Prince had cased
His limbs in silver mail, and on his head
Worn snowy plumes, and, covered thus in white,
Shone in the fiercest turmoil of the fight;

And mostly for the whiteness of his soul,
Which seemed so virginal and all unblurred, —
They called him the White Prince, and through the whole
True land the name became a household word.
"God save the Queen!" the loyal people sung,
"And the White Prince!" came back from every tongue.

So passed the stages of a glorious reign.
The Queen in tranquil goodness reached her noon;
The Prince wore year by year his double chain;
His mistress kept her secret like the moon,
That hides one half its splendor and its shade;
And newer times and men their entrance made.

But did these two, who took their secret fill
Of stolen waters, find the greater bliss
They sought? At first, to meet and part at will
Was, for the peril's sake, a happiness;
Ay, even the sense of guilt made such delights
More worth, as one we call the wisest writes.

But with the later years Time brought about
His famed revenges. Not that love grew cold,
The lady never found a cause to doubt
That with the Prince his passion kept its hold;
And while their loved are loyal to them yet,
'T is not the wont of women to regret.

Yet 't was her lot to live as one whose wealth
Is in another's name; to sigh at fate

That hedged her from possession, save by stealth
And trespass on the guileless Queen's estate;
To see her lover furthest when most near,
Nor dare before the world to make him dear.

To see her perfect beauty but a lure,
That made men list to follow where she went,
And kneel to woo the hand they deemed so pure,
And hunger for her pitying mouth's consent;
Calling her hard, who was so gently made,
Nor found delight in all their homage paid.

Nor ever yet was woman's life complete
Till at her breast the child of him she loved
Made life and love one name. Though love be sweet,
And passing sweet, till then its growth has proved
In woman's paradise a sterile tree,
Fruitless, though fair its leaves and blossoms be.

Meanwhile the Prince put on his own disguise,
Holding it naught for what it kept secure,
Nor wore it only in his comrades' eyes;
Beneath this cloak and seeming to be pure
He felt the thing he seemed. For some brief space
His conscience took the reflex of his face.

But lastly through his heart there crept a sense
Of falseness, like a worm about the core,
Until he grew to loathe the long pretence
Of blamelessness and would the mask he wore
By some swift judgment from his face were torn,
So might the outer quell the inner scorn.

Such self-contempt befell him, when the feast
Rang with his praise, he blushed from nape to crown,
And ground his teeth in silence, yet had ceased
To bear it, crying, "Crush me not quite down,

Who ask your scorn, as viler than you deem
Your vilest, and am nothing that I seem!"

With such a cry his conscience riotous
Had thrown, perchance, the burden on it laid,
But love and pity held his voice; and thus
The paramours their constant penance made;
False to themselves, before the world a lie,
Yet each for each had cast the whole world by.

In those transcendent moments, when the fire
Leapt up between them rapturous and bright,
One incompleteness bred a wild desire
To let the rest have token of its light;
So natural seemed their love, — so hapless, too,
They might not make it glorious to view,

And speak their joy. 'T was all as they had come,
They two, in some far wildwood wandering mazed,
Upon a mighty cataract, whose foam
And splendor ere that time had never dazed
Men's eyes, nor any hearing save their own
Could listen to its immemorial moan,

And felt amid their triumph bitter pain
That only for themselves was spread that sight.
Oft, when his comrades sang a tender strain,
And music, talk, and wine outlasted night,
Rose in the Prince's throat this sudden tide,
"And I, — I also know where Love doth hide!"

Yet still the seals were ever on his mouth;
No heart, save one, his joy and dole might share.
Passed on the winter's rain and summer's drouth;
Friends more and more, and lovers true, the pair,
Though life its passion and its youth had spent,
Still kept their faith as seasons came and went.

One final hour, with stammering voice and halt,
The Prince said: "Dear, for you, — whose only gain
Was in your love that made such long default
To self, — Heaven deems you sinless! but a pain
Is on my soul, and shadow of guilt threefold:
First, in your fair life, fettered by my hold;

"Then in the ceaseless wrong I do the Queen,
Who worships me, unknowing; worse than all,
To wear before the world this painted mien!
See to it: on my head some bolt will fall!
We have sweet memories of the good years past,
Now let this secret league no longer last."

So of her love and pure unselfishness
She yielded at his word, yet fain would pray
For one more tryst, one day of tenderness,
Where first their lives were mated. Such a day
Found them entwined together, met to part,
Lips pressed to lips, and voiceless grief at heart.

And last the Prince drew off his signet-stone
And gave it to his mistress, — as he rose
To shut the book of happy moments gone,
For so all earthly pleasures find a close, —
Yet promised, at her time of utmost need
And summons by that token, to take heed

And do her will. "And from this hour," he said,
"No woman's kiss save one my lips shall know."
So left her pale and trembling there, and fled,
Nor looked again, resolved it must be so;
But somewhere gained his horse, and through the wood
Moved homeward with his thoughts, a phantom brood

That turned the long past over in his mind,
Poising its good and evil, while a haze

Gathered around him, of that sombre kind
  Which follows from a place where many days
Have seen us go and come; and even if sore
Has been our sojourn there, we feel the more

That parting is a sorrow, — though we part
  With those who loved us not, or go forlorn
From pain that ate its canker in the heart;
  But when we leave the paths where Love has borne
His garlands to us, Pleasure poured her wine,
Where life was wholly precious and divine,

Then go we forth as exiles. In such wise
  The loath, wan Prince his homeward journey made,
Brooding, and marked not with his downcast eyes
  The shadow that within the coppice shade
Sank darker still; but at the horse's gait
Kept slowly on, and rode to meet his fate.

For from the west a silent gathering drew,
  And hid the summer sky, and brought swift night
Across that shire, and went devouring through
  The strong old forest, stronger in its might.
With the first sudden crash the Prince's steed
Took the long stride, and galloped at good need.

The wild pace tallied with the rider's mood,
  And on he spurred, and even now had reached
The storm that charged the borders of the wood,
  When one great whirlwind seized an oak which bleached
Across his path, and felled it; and its fall
Bore down the Prince beneath it, horse and all.

There lay he as he fell; but the mad horse
  Plunged out in fright, and reared upon his feet,
And for the city struck a headlong course,
  With clatter of hoof along the central street,

Nor halted till, thus masterless and late,
Bleeding and torn, he reached the palace-gate.

Then rose a clamor and the tidings spread,
And servitors and burghers thronged about,
Crying, "The Prince's horse! the Prince is dead!"
Till on the courser's track they sallied out,
And came upon the fallen oak, and found
The Prince sore maimed and senseless on the ground.

Then wattling boughs, they raised him in their hold,
And after that rough litter, and before,
The people went in silence; but there rolled
A fiery vapor from the lights they bore,
Like some red serpent huge along the road.
Even thus they brought him back to his abode.

There the pale Queen fell on him at the porch,
Dabbling her robes in blood, and made ado,
And over all his henchman held a torch,
Until with reverent steps they took him through;
And the doors closed, and midnight from the domes
Was sounded, and the people sought their homes.

But on the morrow, like a dreadful bird,
Flew swift the tidings of this sudden woe,
And reached the Prince's paramour, who heard
Aghast, as one who crieth loud, "The blow
Is fallen! I am the cause!" — as one who saith,
"Now let me die, whose hands have given death!"

So gat her to the town remorsefully,
White with a mortal tremor and the sin
Which sealed her mouth, and waited what might be,
And watched the doors she dared not pass within.
Alas, poor lady! that lone week of fears
Outlived the length of all her former years.

THE BLAMELESS PRINCE

Some days the Prince, upon the skirts of death,
Spake not a word nor heard the Queen's one prayer,
Nor turned his face, nor felt her loving breath,
Nor saw his children when they gathered there,
But rested dumb and motionless; and so
The Queen grew weak with watching and her woe,

Till from his bed they bore her to her own
A little. In the middle-tide of night,
Thereafter, he awoke with moan on moan,
And saw his death anigh, and said outright,
'I had all things, but love was worth them all!"
Then sped they for the Queen, yet ere the call

Reached her, he cried once more, "Too late! too late!"
And at those words, before they led her in,
Came the sure dart of him that lay in wait.
The Prince was dead: what goodness and what sin
Died with him were untold. At sunrise fell
Across the capital his solemn knell.

All respite it forbade, and joyance thence,
To one for whom his passion till the last
Wrought in the dying Prince. Her wan suspense
Thus ended, a great fear upon her passed.
"I was the cause!" she moaned from day to day,
"Now let me bear the penance as I may!"

So with her whole estate she sought and gained
A refuge in a nunnery close at view,
And there for months withdrew her, and remained
In tears and prayers. Anon a sickness grew
Upon her, and her face the ghost became
Of what it was, the same and not the same.

So died the blameless Prince. The spacious land
Was smitten in his death, and such a wail
Arose, as when the midnight angel's hand
Was laid on Egypt. Gossips ceased their tale,
Or whispered of his goodness, and were mute;
No sound was heard of viol or of lute;

The streets were hung with black; the artisan
Forsook his forge; the artist dropped his brush;
The tradesmen closed their windows. Man with man
Struck hands together in the first deep hush
Of grief; or, where the dead Prince lay in state,
Spoke of his life, so blameless, pure, and great.

But when, within the dark cathedral vault,
They joined his ashes to the dust of kings,
No royal pomp was shown; for Death made halt
Above the palace yet, on dusky wings,
Waiting to gain the Queen, who still was prone
Along the couch where haply she had thrown,

At knowledge of the end, her stricken frame.
With visage pale as in a mortal swound
She stayed, nor slept, nor wept, till, weeping, came
The crown-prince and besought her to look round
And speak unto her children. Then she said:
"Hereto no grief has fallen on our head;

"Now all our earthly portion in one mass
Is loosed against us with this single stroke!
Yet we are Queen, and still must live, — alas! —
As he would have us." Even as she spoke
She wept, and mended thence, yet bore the face
Of one whose fate delays but for a space.

Thenceforth she worked and waited till the call
Of Heaven should close the labor and the pause.

Months, seasons passed, yet evermore a pall
Hung round the court. The sorrow and the cause
Were always with her; after things were tame
Beside the shadow of his deeds and fame.

Her palaces and parks seemed desolate;
No joy was left in sky or street or field;
No age, she thought, would see the Prince's mate:
What matchless hand his knightly sword could wield?
The world had lost, this royal widow said,
Its one bright jewel when the Prince was dead.

So that his fame might be enduring there
For many a reign, and sacred through the land,
She gathered bronze and lazuli, and rare
Swart marbles, while her cunning artists planned
A stately cenotaph, — and bade them place
Above its front the Prince's form and face,

Sculptured, as if in life. But the pale Queen,
Watching the work herself, would somewhat lure
Her heart from plaining; till, behind a screen,
The tomb was finished, glorious and pure,
Even like the Prince: and they proclaimed a day
When the Queen's hand should draw its veil away.

It chanced, the noon before, she bade them fetch
Her equipage, and with her children rode
Beyond the city walls, across a stretch
Of the green open country, where abode
Her subjects, happy in the field and grange,
And with their griefs, that took a meaner range,

Content. But as her joyless vision dwelt
On beauty that so failed her wound to heal,
She marked the Abbey's ancient pile, and felt
A longing at its chapel-shrine to kneel,

To pray, and think awhile on Heaven, — her one
Sole passion, now the Prince had thither gone.

She reached the gate, and through the vestibule
The nuns, with reverence for the royal sorrow,
Led to the shrine, and left her there to school
Her heart for that sad pageant of the morrow.
O, what deep sighs, what piteous tearful prayers,
What golden grief-blanched hair strewn unawares!

Anon her coming through the place was sped,
And when from that lone ecstasy she rose
The saintly Abbess held her steps, and said:
"God rest those, daughter, who in others' woes
Forget their own! In yonder corridor
A sister-sufferer lies, and will no more

"Pass through her door to catch the morning's breath, —
A worldling once, the chamberlain's young wife,
But now a pious novice, meet for death;
She prays to see your face once more in life."
"She, too, is widowed," thought the Queen. Aloud
She answered, "I will visit her," and bowed

Her head, and, following, reached the room where lay
One that had wronged her so; and shrank to see
That beauteous pallid face, so pined away,
And the starved lips that murmured painfully,
"I have a secret none but she may hear."
At the Queen's sign, they two were left anear.

With that the dying rushed upon her speech,
As one condemned, who gulps the poisoned wine
Nor pauses, lest to see it stand at reach
Were crueller still. "Madam, I sought a sign,"
She cried, "to know if God would have me make
Confession, and to you! now let me take

"This meeting as the sign, and speak, and die!"
"Child," said the Queen, "your years are yet too few.
See how I live,— and yet what sorrows lie
About my heart." — "I know, — the world spake true!
You too have loved him: ay, he seems to stand
Between us! Queen, you had the Prince's hand,

"But not his love!" Across the good Queen's brow
A flame of anger reddened, as when one
Meets unprepared a swift and ruthless blow,
But instant paled to pity, as she thought,
"She wanders: 't is the fever at her brain!"
And looked her thought. The other cried again:

"Yes! I am ill of body and soul indeed,
Yet this was as I say. O, not for me
Pity, from you who wear the widow's weed,
Unknowing!" — "Woman, whose could that love be,
If not all mine?" The other, with a moan,
Rose in her bed; the pillow, backward thrown,

Was darkened with the torrent of her hair.
"'T was hers," she wailed, — "'t was hers who loved him best."
Then tore apart her night-robe, and laid bare
Her flesh, and lo! against her poor white breast
Close round her gloomed a shift of blackest serge,
Fearful, concealed! — "I might not sing his dirge,"

She said, "nor moan aloud and bring him shame,
Nor haunt his tomb and cling about the grate,
But this I fashioned when the tidings came
That he was dead and I must expiate,
Being left, our double sin!" — In the Queen's heart,
The tiger — that is prisoned at life's start

In mortals, though perchance it never wakes
From its mute sleep — began to rouse and crawl.
Her lips grew white, and on her nostrils flakes
Of wrath and loathing stood. "What, now, is all
This wicked drivel?" she cried; "how dare they bring
The Queen to listen to so foul a thing?"

"Queen! I speak truth, — the truth, I say! He fed
Upon these lips, — this hair he loved to praise!
I held within these arms his bright fair head
Pressed close, ah, close! — Our lifetimes were the days
We met, — the rest a void!" — "Thou spectral Sin,
Be silent! or, if such a thing hath been, —

"If this be not thy frenzy, — quick, the proof,
Before I score the lie thy lips amid!"
She spoke so dread the other crouched aloof,
Panting, but with gaunt hands somewhere undid
A knot within her hair, and thence she took
The signet-ring and passed it. The Queen's look

Fell on it, and that moment the strong stay,
Which held her from the instinct of her wrong,
Broke, and therewith the whole device gave way,
The grand ideal she had watched so long:
As if a tower should fall, and on the plain
Only a scathed and broken pile remain.

But in its stead she would not measure yet
The counter-chance, nor deem this sole attaint
Made the Prince less than one in whom 't was set
To prove him man. "I held him as a saint,"
She thought, "no other: — of all men alone
My blameless one! Too high my faith had flown:

"So be it!" With a sudden bitter scorn
She said: "You were his plaything, then! the food

Wherewith he dulled what appetite is born,
Of the gross kind, in men. His nobler mood
You knew not! How, shall I, — the fountain life
Of yonder children, — his embosomed wife,

"Through all these years, — shall I, his Queen, for this
Sin-smitten harlot's gage of an hour's shame,
Misdoubt him?" — "Yes, I was his harlot, — yes,
God help me! and had worn the loathly name
Before the world, to have him in that guise!"
"Thou strumpet! wilt thou have me of his prize

"Rob Satan?" cried the Queen, and one step moved.
"Queen, if you loved him, save me from your bane,
As something that was dear to him you loved!"
Then from beneath her serge she took the chain
Which, long ago in that lone wood, the Prince
Hung round her, — she had never loosed it since, —

And gave therewith the face which, in its years
Of youthful, sunniest grace, a limner drew;
And unsigned letters, darkened with her tears,
Writ in the hand that hapless sovereign knew
Too well; — then told the whole, strange, secret tale,
As if with Heaven that penance could avail,

Or with the Queen, who heard as idols list
The mad priest's cry, nor changed her place nor moaned.
But, clutching those mute tokens of each tryst,
Hid them about her. But the other groaned:
"The picture, — let me see it ere I die, —
Then take them all! once, only!" — At that cry

The Queen strode forward with an awful stride,
And seized the dying one, and bore her down,
And rose her height, and said, "Thou shouldst have died
Ere telling this, nor I have worn a crown

To hear it told. I am of God accurst!
Of all his hated, may he smite thee first!"

With that wild speech she fled, nor looked behind,
Hasting to get her from that fearful room,
Past the meek nuns in wait. These did not find
The sick one's eyes — yet staring through the gloom,
While her hands fumbled at her heart, and Death
Made her limbs quake, and combated her breath —

More dreadful than the Queen's look, as she thence
Made through the court, and reached her own array
She knew not how, and clamored, "Bear me hence!"
And, even as her chariot moved away,
High o'er the Abbey heard the minster toll
Its doleful bell, as for a passing soul.

Though midst her guardsmen, as they speeded back,
The wont of royalty maintained her still,
Where grief had been were ruin now and rack!
The firm earth reeled about, nor could her will
Make it seem stable, while her soul went through
Her wedded years in desperate review.

The air seemed full of lies; the realm, unsound;
Her courtiers, knaves; her maidens, good and fair,
Most shameless bawds; her children clung around
Like asps, to sting her; from the kingdom's heir,
Shuddering, she turned her face, — his features took
A shining horror from his father's look.

Along her city streets the thrifty crowd,
As the Queen passed, their loving reverence made.
"'T is false! they love me not!" she cried aloud:
So flung her from her chariot, and forbade
All words, but waved her ladies back, and gained
Her inmost room, and by herself remained.

"We have been alone these years, and knew it not,"
She said; "now let us on the knowledge thrive!"
So closed the doors, and all things else forgot
Than her own misery. "I cannot live
And bear this death," she said, "nor die, the more
To meet him, — and that woman gone before!"

Thus with herself she writhed, while midnight gloomed,
As lone as any outcast of us all;
And once, without a purpose, as the doomed
Stare round and count the shadows on the wall,
Unclasped a poet's book which near her lay,
And turned its pages in that witless way,

And read the song, some wise, sad man had made,
With bitter frost about his doubting heart.
"What is this life," it plained, "what masquerade
Of which ye all are witnesses and part?
'T is but a foolish, smiling face to wear
Above your mortal sorrow, chill despair;

"To mock your comrades and yourselves with mirth
That feels the care ye cannot drive away;
To vaunt of health, yet hide beneath the girth
Impuissance, fell sickness, slow decay;
To cloak defeat, and with the rich, the great,
Applaud their fairer fortunes as they mate;

"To brave the sudden woe, the secret loss,
Though but to-morrow brings the open shame;
To pay the tribute of your caste, and toss
Your last to him that 's richer save in name;
To judge your peers, and give the doleful meed
To crime that 's white beside your hidden deed;

"To whisper love, where of true love is none, —
Desire, where lust is dead; to live unchaste,

And wear the priestly cincture; — last, to own,
When the morn's dream is gone and noontide waste,
Some fate still kept ye from your purpose sweet,
Down strange, circuitous paths it drew your feet!"

Thus far she read, and, "Let me read no more,"
She clamored, "since the scales have left mine eyes
And freed the dreadful gift I lacked before!
We are but puppets, in whatever guise
They clothe us, to whatever tune we move;
Albeit we prate of duty, dream of love.

"Let me, too, play the common part, and wean
My life from hope, and look beneath the mask
To read the masker! I, who was a Queen,
And like a hireling thought to 'scape my task!
For some few seasons left this heart is schooled:
Yet, — had it been a little longer fooled, —

"O God!" And from her seat she bowed her down.
The gentle sovereign of that spacious land
Lay prone beneath the bauble of her crown,
Nor heard all night her whispering ladies stand
Outside the portal. Greatly, in the morn,
They marvelled at her visage wan and worn.

But when the sun was high, the populace
By every gateway filled the roads, and sought
The martial plain, within whose central space
That wonder of the Prince's tomb was wrought.
Thereto from out the nearer land there passed
The mingled folk, an eager throng and vast;

Knights, commons, men and women, young and old,
The present and the promise of the realm.

Anon the coming of the Queen was told,
And mounted guards, with sable plumes at helm,
Made through the middle, like a reaper's swath,
A straight, wide roadway for the sovereign's path,

Then rose the murmurous sound of her advance,
And, with the crown-prince, and her other brood
Led close behind, she came. Her countenance
Moved not to right nor left, until she stood
Before the tomb; yet those, who took the breath
That clothed her progress, felt a waft of death.

O noble martyr! queenliest intent!
Strong human soul, that holds to pride through all!
Ah me! with what fierce heavings in them pent
The brave complete their work, whate'er befall!
Upon her front the people only read
Pale grief that clung forever to the dead.

How should they know she trod the royal stand,
And took within her hold the silken line,
As, while the headsman waits, one lays her hand
Upon the scarf that slays her by a sign?
With one great pang she drew the veil, and lo!
The work was dazzling in the noonday glow.

There shone the Prince's image, golden, high,
Installed forever in the people's sight.
"Alas!" they cried, "too good, too fair to die!"
But at the foot the Queen had bid them write
Her consort's goodness, and his glory-roll,
Yet knew not they had carved upon the scroll

That last assurance of his stainless heart, —
For such they deemed his words who heard them fall, —
"*Of all great things this Prince achieved his part,*
Yet wedded Love to him was worth them all."

Thus read the Queen: till now, her injured soul
Of its forlornness had not felt the whole.

Now all her heart was broken. There she fell,
  And to the skies her lofty spirit fled.
The wrong of those mute words had smitten well.
  A cry went up: "The Queen! the Queen is dead!
O regal heart that would not reign alone!
O fatal sorrow! O the empty throne!"

Her people made her beauteous relics room
  Within the chamber where her consort slept.
There rest they side by side. Around the tomb
  A thousand matrons solemn vigil kept.
Long ages told the story of her reign,
And sang the nuptial love that hath no stain.

POEMS OF NATURE

THE FRESHET

That year our Equinoctial came along
Ere the snow left us. Under mountain pines
White drifts lay frozen like the dead, and down
Through many a gorge the bristling hemlocks crossed
Their spears above the ice-enfettered brooks;
But the pent river wailed, through prison walls,
For freedom and the time to rend its chains.
At last it came: five days a drenching rain
Flooded the country; snow-drifts fell away;
The brooks grew rivers, and the river here —
A ravenous, angry torrent — tore up banks,
And overflowed the meadows, league on league.
Great cakes of ice, four-square, with mounds of hay,
Fence-rails, and scattered drift-wood, and huge beams
From broken dams above us, mill-wheel ties,
Smooth lumber, and the torn-up trunks of trees,
Swept downward, strewing all the land about.
Sometimes the flood surrounded, unawares,
Stray cattle, or a flock of timorous sheep,
And bore them with it, struggling, till the ice
Beat shape and being from them. You know how
These freshets scour our valleys. So it raged
A night and day; but when the day grew night
The storm fell off; lastly, the sun went down
Quite clear of clouds, and ere he came again
The flood began to lower.

Through the rise
We men had been at work, like water-sprites,

Lending a helping hand to cottagers
Along the lowlands. Now, at early morn,
The banks were sentry-lined with thrifty swains,
Who hauled great stores of drift-wood up the slope.
But toward the bridge our village maidens soon
Came flocking, thick as swallows after storms,
When, with light wing, they skim the happy fields
And greet the sunshine. Danger mostly gone,
They watched the thunderous passage of the flood
Between the abutments, while the upper stream,
Far as they saw, lay like a seething strait,
From hill to hill. Below, with gradual fall
Through narrower channels, all was clash and clang
And inarticulate tumult. Through the grove
Yonder, our picnic-ground, the driving tide
Struck a new channel, and the craggy ice
Scored down its saplings. Following with the rest
Came George and Lucy, not three honeymoons
Made man and wife, and happier than a pair
Of cooing ring-doves in the early June.

Two piers, you know, bore up the former bridge,
Cleaving the current, wedge-like, on the north;
Between them stood our couple, intergrouped
With many others. On a sudden loomed
An immolating terror from above,—
A floating field of ice, where fifty cakes
Had clung together, mingled with a mass
Of *débris* from the upper conflict, logs
Woven in with planks and fence-rails; and in front
One huge, old, fallen trunk rose like a wall
Across the channel. Then arose a cry
From all who saw it, clamoring, *Flee the bridge!*
Run shoreward for your lives! and all made haste,
Eastward and westward, till they felt the ground
Stand firm beneath them; but, with close-locked arms,
Lucy and George still looked, from the lower rail,

Toward the promontory where we stood,
Nor saw the death, nor seemed to hear the cry.
Run George! run Lucy! shouted all at once;
Too late, too late! for, with resistless crash,
Against both piers that mighty ruin lay
A space that seemed an hour, yet far too short
For rescue. Swaying slowly back and forth,
With ponderous tumult, all the bridge went off;
Piers, beams, planks, railings snapped their groaning ties
And fell asunder!

But the middle part,
Wrought with great bolts of iron, like a raft
Held out awhile, whirled onward in the wreck
This way and that, and washed with freezing spray.
Faster than I can tell you, it came down
Beyond our point, and in a flash we saw
George, on his knees, close-clinging for dear life,
One arm around the remnant of the rail,
One clasping Lucy. We were pale as they,
Powerless to save; but even as they swept
Across the bend, and twenty stalwart men
Ran to and fro with clamor for *A rope!*
A boat! — their cries together reached the shore;
Save her! Save him! — so true Love conquers all.
Furlongs below they still more closely held
Each other, 'mid a thousand shocks of ice
And seething horrors; till, at last, the end
Came, where the river, scornful of its bed,
Struck a new channel, roaring through the grove.
There, dashed against a naked beech that stood
Grimly in front, their shattered raft gave up
Its precious charge; and then a mist of tears
Blinded all eyes, through which we seemed to see
Two forms in death-clasp whirled along the flood,
And all was over.

THE SWALLOW

Had I, my love declared, the tireless wing
That wafts the swallow to her northern skies,
I would not, sheer within the rich surprise
Of full-blown Summer, like the swallow, fling
My coyer being; but would follow Spring,
Melodious consort, as she daily flies,
Apace with suns, that o'er new woodlands rise
Each morn — with rains her gentler stages bring.
My pinions should beat music with her own;
Her smiles and odors should delight me ever,
Gliding, with measured progress, from the zone
Where golden seas receive the mighty river,
Unto yon lichened cliffs, whose ridges sever
Our Norseland from the arctic surge's moan.

REFUGE IN NATURE

When the rude world's relentless war has pressed
Fiercely upon them, and the hot campaign
Closes with battles lost, some yield their lives,
Or linger in the ruins of the fight —
Unwise, and comprehending not their fate,
Nor gathering that affluent recompense
Which the all-pitying Earth has yet in store.
Surely such men have never known the love
Of Nature; nor had recourse to her fount
Of calm delights, whose influences heal
The wounded spirits of her vanquished sons;
Nor ever — in those fruitful earlier days,
Wherein her manifest forms do most enrich
Our senses void of subtler cognizance —
Wandered in summer fields, climbed the free hills,
Pursued the murmuring music of her streams,
And found the borders of her sounding sea.

But thou — when, in the multitudinous lists
Of traffic, all thine own is forfeited
At some wild hazard, or by weakening drains
Poured from thee; or when, striving for the meed
Of place, thou failest, and the lesser man
By each ignoble method wins thy due;
When the injustice of the social world
Environs thee; when ruthless public scorn,
Black slander, and the meannesses of friends
Have made the bustling practice of the world
To thee a discord and a mockery;
Or even if that last extremest pang
Be thine, and, added to such other woes,
The loss of that forever faithful love
Which else had balanced all: the putting out,
Untimely, of the light in dearest eyes; —
At such a time thou well may'st count the days
Evil, and for a season quit the field;
Yet not surrendering all human hopes,
Nor the rich physical life which still remains
God's boon and thy sustainer. It were base
To join alliance with the hosts of Fate
Against thyself, crowning their victory
By loose despair, or seeking rest in death.

More wise, betake thee to those sylvan haunts
Thou knewest when young, and, once again a child,
Let their perennial loveliness renew
Thy natural faith and childhood's heart serene.
Forgetting all the toilsome pilgrimage,
Awake from strife and shame, as from a dream
Dreamed by a boy, when under waving trees
He sleeps and dreams a languid afternoon.
Once more from these harmonious beauties gain
Repose and ransom, and a power to feel
The immortal gladness of inanimate things.

There is the mighty Mother, ever young
And garlanded, and welcoming her sons.
There are her thousand charms to soothe thy pain,
And merge thy little, individual woe
In the broad health and happy fruitfulness
Of all that smiles around thee. For thy sake
The woven arches of her forests breathe
Perpetual anthems, and the blue skies smile
Between, to heal thee with their infinite hope.
There are her crystal waters : lave thy brows,
Hot with long turmoil, in their purity;
Wash off the battle-dust from those poor limbs
Blood-stained and weary. Holy sleep shall come
Upon thee; waking, thou shalt find in bloom
The lilies, fresh as in the olden days;
And once again, when Night unveils her stars,
Thou shalt have sight of their high radiance,
And feel the old, mysterious awe subdue
The phantoms of thy pain.

And from that height
A voice shall whisper of the faith, through which
A man may act his part until the end.
Anon thy ancient yearning for the fight
May come once more, tempered by poise of chance,
And guided well with all experience.
Invisible hands may gird thy armor on,
And Nature put new weapons in thy hands,
Sending thee out to try the world again, —
Perchance to conquer, being cased in mail
Of double memories; knowing smaller griefs
Can add no sorrow to the woeful past;
And that, howbeit thou mayest stand or fall,
Earth proffers men her refuge everywhere,
And Heaven's promise is for aye the same.

SURF

Splendors of morning the billow-crests brighten,
Lighting and luring them on to the land, —
Far-away waves where the wan vessels whiten,
Blue rollers breaking in surf where we stand.
Curved like the necks of a legion of horses,
Each with his froth-gilded mane flowing free,
Hither they speed in perpetual courses,
Bearing thy riches, O beautiful sea!

Strong with the striving of yesterday's surges,
Lashed by the wanton winds leagues from the shore,
Each, driven fast by its follower, urges
Fearlessly those that are fleeting before;
How they leap over the ridges we walk on,
Flinging us gifts from the depths of the sea, —
Silvery fish for the foam-haunting falcon,
Palm-weed and pearls for my darling and me!

Light falls her foot where the rift follows after,
Finer her hair than your feathery spray,
Sweeter her voice than your infinite laughter, —
Hist! ye wild couriers, list to my lay!
Deep in the chambers of grottos auroral
Morn laves her jewels and bends her red knee:
Thence to my dear one your amber and coral
Bring for her dowry, O beautiful sea!

WOODS AND WATERS

"O ye valleys! O ye mountains!
O ye groves and crystal fountains!
How I love at liberty,
By turns, to come and visit ye!"

Come, let us burst the cerements and the shroud,
And with the livelong year renew our breath,

Far from the darkness of the city's cloud
Which hangs above us like the pall of Death.
Haste, let us leave the shadow of his wings!
Off from our cares, a stolen, happy time!
Come where the skies are blue, the uplands green;
For hark! the robin sings
Even here, blithe herald, his auroral rhyme,
Foretelling joy, and June his sovereign queen.

See, in our pavèd courts her missal scroll
Is dropped astealth, and every verdant line,
Emblazoned round with Summer's aureole,
Pictures to eager eyes, like thine and mine,
Her trees new-leaved and hillsides far away.
Ransom has come: out from this vaulted town,
Poor prisoners of a giant old and blind,
Into the breezy day,
Fleeing the sights and sounds that wear us down,
And in the fields our ancient solace find!

Again I hunger for the living wood,
The laurelled crags, the hemlocks hanging wide,
The rushing stream that will not be withstood,
Bound forward to wed him with the river's tide:
O what wild leaps through many a fettered pass,
Through knotted ambuscade of root and rock,
How white the plunge, how dark the cloven pool!
Then to rich meadow-grass,
And pastures fed by tinkling herd and flock,
Till the wide stream receives its waters cool.

Again I long for lakes that lie between
High mountains, fringed about with virgin firs,
Where hand of man has never rudely been,
Nor plashing wheel the limpid water stirs;
There let us twain begin the world again
Like those of old; while tree, and trout, and deer

Unto their kindred beings draw our own,
Till more than haunts of men,
Than place and pelf, more welcome these appear,
And better worth sheer life than we had known.

Thither, ay, thither flee, O dearest friend,
From walls wherein we grow so wan and old!
The liberal Earth will still her lovers lend
Water of life and storied sands of gold.
Though of her perfect form thou hast secured
Thy will, some charm shall aye thine hold defy,
And day by day thy passion yet shall grow,
Even as a bridegroom, lured
By the unravished secret of her eye,
Reads the bride's soul, yet never all can know.

And when from her embrace again thou 'rt torn,
(Though well for her the world were thrown away!)
At thine old tasks thou 'lt not be quite forlorn,
Remembering where is peace; and thou shalt say,
"I know where beauty has not felt the curse,—
Where, though I age, all round me is so young
That in its youth my soul's youth mirrored seems."
Yes, in their rippling verse,
For all our toil, they have not falsely sung
Who said there still was rest beyond our dreams.

THE MOUNTAIN

Two thousand feet in air it stands
Betwixt the bright and shaded lands,
Above the regions it divides
And borders with its furrowed sides,
The seaward valley laughs with light
Till the round sun o'erhangs this height;
But then the shadow of the crest

No more the plains that lengthen west
Enshrouds, yet slowly, surely creeps
Eastward, until the coolness steeps
A darkling league of tilth and wold,
And chills the flocks that seek their fold.

Not like those ancient summits lone,
Mont Blanc, on his eternal throne, —
The city-gemmed Peruvian peak, —
The sunset-portals landsmen seek,
Whose train, to reach the Golden Land,
Crawls slow and pathless through the sand, —
Or that, whose ice-lit beacon guides
The mariner on tropic tides,
And flames across the Gulf afar,
A torch by day, by night a star, —
Not thus, to cleave the outer skies,
Does my serener mountain rise,
Nor aye forget its gentle birth
Upon the dewy, pastoral earth.

But ever, in the noonday light,
Are scenes whereof I love the sight, —
Broad pictures of the lower world
Beneath my gladdened eyes unfurled.
Irradiate distances reveal
Fair nature wed to human weal;
The rolling valley made a plain;
Its checkered squares of grass and grain;
The silvery rye, the golden wheat,
The flowery elders where they meet, —
Ay, even the springing corn I see,
And garden haunts of bird and bee;
And where, in daisied meadows, shines
The wandering river through its vines,
Move specks at random, which I know
Are herds a-grazing to and fro.

Yet still a goodly height it seems
From which the mountain pours his streams,
Or hinders, with caressing hands,
The sunlight seeking other lands.
Like some great giant, strong and proud,
He fronts the lowering thunder-cloud,
And wrests its treasures, to bestow
A guerdon on the realm below;
Or, by the deluge roused from sleep
Within his bristling forest-keep,
Shakes all his pines, and far and wide
Sends down a rich, imperious tide.
At night the whistling tempests meet
In tryst upon his topmost seat,
And all the phantoms of the sky
Frolic and gibber, storming by.

By day I see the ocean-mists
Float with the current where it lists,
And from my summit I can hail
Cloud-vessels passing on the gale, —
The stately argosies of air, —
And parley with the helmsmen there;
Can probe their dim, mysterious source,
Ask of their cargo and their course, —
Whence come? where bound? — and wait reply,
As, all sails spread, they hasten by.

If foiled in what I fain would know,
Again I turn my eyes below
And eastward, past the hither mead
Where all day long the cattle feed,
A crescent gleam my sight allures
And clings about the hazy moors, —
The great, encircling, radiant sea,
Alone in its immensity.

Even there, a queen upon its shore,
I know the city evermore
Her palaces and temples rears,
And wooes the nations to her piers;
Yet the proud city seems a mole
To this horizon-bounded whole;
And, from my station on the mount,
The whole is little worth account
Beneath the overhanging sky,
That seems so far and yet so nigh.
Here breathe I inspiration rare,
Unburdened by the grosser air
That hugs the lower land, and feel
Through all my finer senses steal
The life of what that life may be,
Freed from this dull earth's density,
When we, with many a soul-felt thrill,
Shall thrid the ether at our will,
Through widening corridors of morn
And starry archways swiftly borne.

Here, in the process of the night,
The stars themselves a purer light
Give out, than reaches those who gaze
Enshrouded with the valley's haze.
October, entering Heaven's fane,
Assumes her lucent, annual reign:
Then what a dark and dismal clod,
Forsaken by the Sons of God,
Seems this sad world, to those which march
Across the high, illumined arch,
And with their brightness draw me forth
To scan the splendors of the North!
I see the Dragon, as he toils
With Ursa in his shining coils,
And mark the Huntsman lift his shield,
Confronting on the ancient field

The Bull, while in a mystic row
The jewels of his girdle glow;
Or, haply, I may ponder long
On that remoter, sparkling throng,
The orient sisterhood, around
Whose chief our Galaxy is wound;
Thus, half enwrapt in classic dreams,
And brooding over Learning's gleams,
I leave to gloom the under-land,
And from my watch-tower, close at hand,
Like him who led the favored race,
I look on glory face to face!

So, on the mountain-top, alone,
I dwell, as one who holds a throne;
Or prince, or peasant, him I count
My peer, who stands upon a mount,
Sees further than the tribes below,
And knows the joys they cannot know;
And, though beyond the sound of speech
They reign, my soul goes out to preach,
Far on their noble heights elsewhere,
My brother-monarchs of the air.

HOLYOKE VALLEY

"Something sweet
Followed youth, with flying feet,
And will never come again."

How many years have made their flights,
Northampton, over thee and me,
Since last I scaled those purple heights
That guard the pathway to the sea;

Or climbed, as now, the topmost crown
Of western ridges, whence again

I see, for miles beyond the town,
That sunlit stream divide the plain?

There still the giant warders stand
And watch the current's downward flow,
And northward still, with threatening hand,
The river bends his ancient bow.

I see the hazy lowlands meet
The sky, and count each shining spire,
From those which sparkle at my feet
To distant steeples tipt with fire.

For still, old town, thou art the same:
The redbreasts sing their choral tune,
Within thy mantling elms aflame,
As in that other, dearer June,

When here my footsteps entered first,
And summer perfect beauty wore,
And all thy charms upon me burst,
While Life's whole journey lay before.

Here every fragrant walk remains,
Where happy maidens come and go,
And students saunter in the lanes
And hum the songs I used to know.

I gaze, yet find myself alone,
And walk with solitary feet:
How strange these wonted ways have grown!
Where are the friends I used to meet?

In yonder shaded Academe
The rippling metres flow to-day,
But other boys at sunset dream
Of love, and laurels far away;

And ah! from yonder trellised home,
  Less sweet the faces are that peer
Than those of old, and voices come
  Less musically to my ear.

Sigh not, ye breezy elms, but give
  The murmur of my sweetheart's vows,
When Life was something worth to live,
  And Love was young beneath your boughs!

Fade beauty, smiling everywhere,
  That can from year to year outlast
Those charms a thousand times more fair,
  And, O, our joys so quickly past!

Or smile to gladden fresher hearts
  Henceforth: but they shall yet be led,
Revisiting these ancient parts,
  Like me to mourn their glory fled.

SEEKING THE MAY-FLOWER

The sweetest sound our whole year round,
  'T is the first robin of the spring!
The song of the full orchard choir
    Is not so fine a thing.

Glad sights are common: Nature draws
  Her random pictures through the year,
But oft her music bids us long
    Remember those most dear.

To me, when in the sudden spring
  I hear the earliest robin's lay,
With the first trill there comes again
    One picture of the May.

The veil is parted wide, and lo,
A moment, though my eyelids close,
Once more I see that wooded hill
Where the arbutus grows.

I see the village dryad kneel,
Trailing her slender fingers through
The knotted tendrils, as she lifts
Their pink, pale flowers to view.

Once more I dare to stoop beside
The dove-eyed beauty of my choice,
And long to touch her careless hair,
And think how dear her voice.

My eager, wandering hands assist
With fragrant blooms her lap to fill,
And half by chance they meet her own,
Half by our young hearts' will.

Till, at the last, those blossoms won,—
Like her, so pure, so sweet, so shy,—
Upon the gray and lichened rocks
Close at her feet I lie.

Fresh blows the breeze through hemlock-trees,
The fields are edged with green below;
And naught but youth and hope and love
We know or care to know!

Hark! from the moss-clung apple-bough,
Beyond the tumbled wall, there broke
That gurgling music of the May,—
'T was the first robin spoke!

I heard it, ay, and heard it not,—
For little then my glad heart wist

A SEA-CHANGE, AT KELP ROCK

What toil and time should come to pass,
And what delight be missed;

Nor thought thereafter, year by year
Hearing that fresh yet olden song,
To yearn for unreturning joys
That with its joy belong.

A SEA-CHANGE, AT KELP ROCK

Just at this full noon of summer
There 's a touch, unfelt before,
Charms our Coastland, smoothing from her
The last crease her forehead wore:
She, too, drains the sun-god's potion,
Quits her part of anchorite,
Smiles to see her leaden ocean
Sparkle in the austral light;

While the tidal depths beneath her
Palpitate with warmth and love,
And the infinite pure æther
Floods the yearning creek and cove,
Harbor, woodland, promontory,
Swarded fields that slope between,—
And our gray tower, tinged with glory,
Midway flames above the scene.

On this day of all most luring,
This one morn of all the year,
Read I — soul and body curing
In the seaward loggia here —
Once, twice, thrice, that chorus sweetest
(Fortune's darling, Sophokles!)
Of the grove whose steeds are fleetest,
Nurtured by the sacred breeze;

Of Kolonos, where in clusters
  Blooms narcissus — where unfold
Ivied trees their leafy lustres
  And the crocus spreads its gold;
Where the nightingales keep singing
  And the streamlets never cease,
To the son of Laius bringing
  Rest at last, forgiveness, peace.

Drops the book — but from its prison
  Tell me now what antique spell,
Through the unclaspt cover risen,
  Moves the waves I know so well;
Bids me find in them hereafter,
  Dimpled to their utmost zone
With the old innumerous laughter,
  An Ægean of my own?

Even so: the blue Ægean
  Through our tendriled arches smiles,
And the distant empyrean
  Curves to kiss enchanted isles:
Isles of Shoals, I know — yet fancy
  This one day shall have free range,
And yon isles her necromancy
  Shall to those of Hellas change.

Look! beyond the lanterned pharos
  Girt with reefs that evermore,
Lashed and foaming, cry "Beware us!"
  Cloud-white sails draw nigh the shore:
Sails, methinks, of burnished galleys
  Wafting dark-browed maids within,
From those island hills and valleys,
  Dread Athene's grace to win.

A SEA-CHANGE, AT KELP ROCK

Sandalled, coiffed, and white-robed maidens,
Chanting in their carven boats;
List! and hear anon the cadence
Of their virginal fresh notes.
You shall hear the choric hymnos,
Or some clear prosodion
Known to Delos, Naxos, Lemnos,
Isles beneath the eastern sun.

'T is the famed Æolian quire
Bearing Pallas flowers and fruit —
Some with white hands touch the lyre,
Some with red lips kiss the flute;
You shall see the vestured priestess,
Violet-crowned, her chalice swing,
Ere yon cerylus has ceased his
Swirl upon "the sea-blue wing."

In the great Panathenæa
Climbing marble porch and stair,
Soon before the statued Dea
Votive baskets they shall bear,
Sacred palm, and fragrant censer,
Wine-cups —
But what vapor hoar,
What cloud-curtain dense, and denser,
Looms between them and the shore?

Off, thou Norseland Terror, clouding
Hellas with the jealous wraith
Which, the gods of old enshrouding,
Froze their hearts, the poet saith!
Vain the cry: from yon abysm
Now the fog-horn's woeful blast —
Stern New England's exorcism! —
Ends my vision of the past.

1890.

THE CARIB SEA

KENNST DU?

Do you know the blue of the Carib Sea
Far out where there 's nothing but sky to bound
The gaze to windward, the glance to lee, —
More deep than the bluest spaces be
Betwixt white clouds in heaven's round?
Have you seen the liquid lazuli spread
From edge to edge, so wondrous blue
That your footfall's trust it might almost woo,
Were it smooth and low for one to tread?
So clear and warm, so bright, so dark,
That he who looks on it can but mark
'T is a different tide from the far-away
Perpetual waters, old and gray,
And can but wonder if Mother Earth
Has given a younger ocean birth.

Do you know how surely the trade-wind blows
To west-sou'west, through the whole round year?
How, after the hurricane comes and goes,
For nine fair moons there is naught to fear?
How the brave wind carries the tide before
Its breath, and on to the southwest shore?
How the Caribbean billows roll,
One after the other, and climb forever, —
The yearning waves of a shoreless river
That never, never can reach its goal?
They follow, follow, now and for aye,
One after the other, brother and brother,
And their hollow crests half hide the play

Of light where the sun's red sword thrusts home;
But still in a tangled shining chain
They quiver and fall and rise again,
And far before them the wind-borne spray
Is shaken on from their froth and foam, —
And for leagues beyond, in gray and rose,
The sundown shimmering distance glows!
— So bright, so swift, so glad, the sea
That girts the isles of Caribbee.

Do you know the green of those island shores
By the morning sea-breeze fanned?
(The tide on the reefs that guard them roars —
Then slips by stealth to the sand.)
Have you found the inlet, cut between
Like a rift across the crescent moon,
And anchored off the dull lagoon
Close by forest fringes green, —
Cool and green, save for the lines
Of yellow cocoa-trunks that lean,
Each in its own wind-nurtured way,
And bend their fronds to the wanton vines
Beneath them all astray?

Here is no mangrove warp-and-woof
From which a vapor lifts aloof,
But on the beaches smooth and dry
Red-lipped conch-shells lie —
Even at the edge of that green wall
Where the shore-grape's tendriled runners spread
And purple trumpet-creepers fall,
And the frangipani's clusters shed
Their starry sweets withal.
The silly cactuses writhe around,
Yet cannot choose but in grace to mingle,
This side the twittering waters sound,
On the other opens a low green dingle,

And between your ship and the shore and sky
The frigate-birds like fates appear,
The flapping pelican feeds about,
The tufted cardinals sing and fly.
So fair the shore, one has no fear;
And the sailors, gathered forward, shout
With strange glad voices each to each, —
Though well the harbor's depth they know
And the craven shark that lurks below, —
"Ho! let us over, and strike out
Until we stand upon the beach,
Until that wonderland we reach!"
— So green, so fair, the island lies,
As if 't were adrift from Paradise.

SARGASSO WEED

Out from the seething Stream
To the steadfast trade-wind's courses,
Over the bright vast swirl
Of a tide from evil free, —
Where the ship has a level beam,
And the storm has spent his forces,
And the sky is a hollow pearl
Curved over a sapphire sea.

Here it floats as of old,
Beaded with gold and amber,
Sea-frond buoyed with fruit,
Sere as the yellow oak,
Long since carven and scrolled,
Of some blue-ceiled Gothic chamber
Used to the viol and lute
And the ancient belfry's stroke.

Eddying far and still
In the drift that never ceases,

The dun Sargasso weed
  Slips from before our prow,
And its sight makes strong our will,
  As of old the Genoese's,
When he stood in his hour of need
  On the Santa Maria's bow.

Ay, and the winds at play
  Toy with these peopled islands,
Each of itself as well
  Naught but a brave New World,
Where the crab and sea-slug stay
  In the lochs of its tiny highlands,
And the nautilus moors his shell
  With his sail and streamers furled.

Each floats ever and on
  As the round green Earth is floating
Out through the sea of space
  Bearing our mortal kind,
Parasites soon to be gone,
  Whom others be sure are noting,
While to their astral race
  We in our turn are blind.

CASTLE ISLAND LIGHT

I

BETWEEN the outer Keys,
  Where the drear Bahamas be,
Through a crooked pass the vessels sail
  To reach the Carib Sea.

'T is the Windward Passage, long and dread,
  From bleak San Salvador;

CASTLE ISLAND LIGHT

(Three thousand miles the wave must roll
Ere it wash the Afric shore).

Here are the coral reefs
That hold their booty fast;
The sea-fan blooms in groves beneath,
And sharks go lolling past.

Hither and yon the sand-bars lie
Where the prickly bush has grown,
And where the rude sponge-fisher dwells
In his wattled hut, alone.

Southward, amid the strait,
Is the Castle Island Light;
Of all that bound the ocean round
It has the loneliest site.

II

'Twixt earth and heaven the waves are driven
Sorely upon its flank;
The light streams out for sea-leagues seven
To the Great Bahama Bank.

A girded tower, a furlong scant
Of whitened sand and rock,
And one sole being the waters seeing,
Where the gull and gannet flock.

He is the warder of the pass
That mariners must find;
His beard drifts down like the ashen moss
Which hangs in the southern wind.

The old man hoar stands on the shore
And bodes the withering gale,

Or wonders whence from the distant world
Will come the next dim sail.

From the Northern Main, from England,
From France, the craft go by;
Yet sometimes one will stay her course
That must his wants supply.

III

In a Christmas storm the "Claribel" struck
At night, on the Pelican Shoal,
But the keeper's wife heard not the guns
And the bell's imploring toll.

She died ere the gale went down,
Wept by her daughters three —
Sun-flecked, yet fair, with their English hair,
Nymphs of the wind and sea.

With sail and oar some island shore
At will their skiffs might gain,
But they never had known the kiss of man,
Nor had looked on the peopled main,

Nor heard of the old man Atlas,
Who holds the unknown seas,
And the golden fruit that is guarded well
By the young Hesperides.

IV

Who steers by Castle Island Light
May hear the seamen tell
How one, the mate, alone was saved
From the wreck of the "Claribel";

And how for months he tarried
With the keeper on the isle,
And for each of the blue-eyed daughters
Had ever a word or a smile.

Between the two that loved him
He lightly made his choice,
And betimes a chance ship took them off
From the father's sight and voice.

The second her trouble could not bear, —
So wild her thoughts had grown
That she fled with a lurking smuggler's crew,
But whither was never known.

Then the keeper aged like Lear,
Left with one faithful child;
But 't was ill to see a maid so young
Who never sang or smiled.

'T is sad to bide with an old, old man,
And between the wave and sky
To watch all day the sea-fowl play,
While lone ships hasten by.

V

There came, anon, the white full moon
That rules the middle year,
Before whose sheen the lesser stars
Grow pale and disappear.

It glistened down on a lighthouse tower,
A beach on either hand,
And the features wan of a gray old man
Digging a grave in the sand.

CHRISTOPHE

(CAPE HAYTIEN)

"KING HENRI is King Stephen's peer,
His breeches cost him but a crown!"
So from the old world came the jeer
Of them who hunted Toussaint down:
But what was this grim slave that swept
The shambles, then to greatness leapt?
Their counterfeit in bronze, a thing
To mock, — or every inch a king?

On San-Souci's defiant wall
His people saw, against the sky,
Christophe, — a shape the height of Saul, —
A chief who brooked no rivals nigh.
Right well he aped the antique state;
His birth was mean, his heart was great;
No azure filled his veins, — instead,
The Afric torrent, hot and red.

He built far up the mountain-side
A royal keep, and walled it round
With towers the palm-tops could not hide;
The ramparts toward ocean frowned;
Beneath, within the rock-hewn hold,
He heaped a monarch's store of gold;
He made his nobles in a breath;
He held the power of life and death;

And here through torrid years he ruled
The Haitian horde, a despot king, —
Mocked Europe's pomp, — her minions schooled
In trade and war and parleying, —
Yet reared his dusky heirs in vain:

LA SOURCE

To end the drama, Fate grew fain,
Uprose a rebel tide, and flowed
Close to the threshold where he strode.

"And now the Black must exit make,
A craven at the last," they say:
Not so, — Christophe his leave will take
The long unwonted Roman way.
"Ho! Ho!" cried he, "the day is done,
And I go down with the setting sun!"
A pistol-shot, — no sign of fear, —
So died Christophe without a peer.

LA SOURCE

(PORT-AU-PRINCE)

A HAUNT the mountain roadside near,
Wherefrom the cliff that rose behind
Kept back, through all the tropic year,
The sundrouth and the whirling wind;
These here could never entrance find;
Perpetual summer balm it knew;
And skyward, thick set boughs entwined
Their coil, where birds made sweet ado,
And heaven through glossy leaves was deepest blue.

Twin relics of some forest grim,
The last of their primeval race
Left scatheless, knit them limb with limb
Above the reaches of that place;
Time's hand against their high embrace
For seeming centuries had striven,
But yet they grappled face to face,
Still from their olden guard undriven
Though at their feet the cliff itself was riven.

And from the rift a stream outflowed,
The fountain of that cloven grot, —
La Source ! Along the downward road
It speeded, pitying the lot
Of dwellers in each hot-roofed spot
Which fiery noonday held in rule, —
Yet at the start neglected not
To broaden into one deep pool
Beneath those trees its staunchless waters cool.

Near the green edge of this recess
We made our halt, and marvelled, more
Than at its sudden loveliness,
To find reborn that life of yore
When ocean to Nausicaa bore
The wanderer from Calypso strayed, —
For here swart dames, and beldames hoar,
With many a round-limbed supple maid,
Plashed in the pool and eyed us unafraid.

The simple, shameless washers there,
Dusk children of the Haitian sun,
Bent to the work their bodies, bare
And brown, nor thought our gaze to shun, —
Save that an elfish withered one,
Scolding the white-toothed girls, set free
Her tongue, and bade them now have done
With saucy pranks, nor wanton be
Before us stranger folk from over sea.

But on the sward one rose full length
From her sole covering, and stood
Defiant in the beauteous strength
Of nature unabashed : a nude
And wilding slip of womanhood.
Now for the master-hand, that shaped
The Indian Hunter in his wood,

TO L. H. S.

To mould that lissome form undraped
Ere from its grace the sure young lines escaped!

Straight as the aloe's crested shoot
That blooms a golden month and dies,
She stayed an instant, with one foot
On tiptoe, poising statue-wise,
And stared, and mocked us with her eyes, —
While rippling to her hip's firm swell
The mestee hair, that so outvies
Europe's soft mesh, and holds right well
The Afric sheen, in one dark torrent fell.

Fi, Angélique! we heard them scream, —
What, could that child, in twice her years,
Change to their like from this fair dream!
Fi donc! — But she, as one who hears
And cares not, at her leisure nears
The pool, and toward her mates at play
Plunges, — and laughter filled our ears
As from La Source we turned away
And rode again into the glare of day.

TO L. H. S.

Love, these vagrant songs may woo you
Once again from winter's ruth, —
Once more quicken memories failing
Of those days when we went sailing,
Eager as when first I knew you,
Sailing after my lost youth.

My lost youth, for in my sight you
Had yourself forborne to change
Since that age when we, together,
Made such mock of wind and weather,

Sought alone what might delight you, —
Ah, how sweet, how far, how strange!

Yet, though scarcely else anear you
Than Tithonus to Aurore,
I am still by Time requited,
Still can vaunt, as when we plighted,
Sight to see you, ear to hear you,
Voice to sing you, if no more.

And in thought I yet behold you
Nearing the enchanted zone, —
(With delight of life the stronger
As we sailed, each blue league longer,
Toward the shore of which I told you,
And the stars myself had known), —

Wondering at the hue beneath you
Of the restless shining waves,
Asking of the palm and coral, —
Of the white cascades — the floral
Ridges waiting long to wreath you
With the blooms our Norseland craves.

Winds enow since then have kissed you,
On their way to bless or blight;
Little may these songs recover
Of that dream-life swiftly over, —
Nay, but Love, a moment list you,
Since none else can set them right.

More and ever more, the while you
Sailed where every distance gleams,
Passed all sorrow, died all anger,
In the clime of love and languor,
Till we reached the mist-hung isle you
Called the haunted Isle of Dreams.

JAMAICA

I KNOW an island which the sun
Stays in his course to shine upon,
As if it were for this green isle
Alone he kept his fondest smile.
Long his rays delaying flood
Its remotest solitude,
Mountain, dell, and palmy wood,
And the coral sands around
That hear the blue sea's chiming sound.

It is a watered island, one
The upland rains pour down upon.
Oft the westward-floating cloud
To some purple crest is bowed,
While the tangled vapors seek
To escape from peak and peak,
Yield themselves, and break, or glide
Through deep forests undescried,
Mourning their lost pathway wide.

In this land of woods and streams
Ceaseless Summer paints her dreams:
White, bewildered torrents fall,
Dazzled by her morning beams,
With an outcry musical
From the ridges, plainward all;
Mists of pearl, arising there,
Mark their courses in the air,
Sunlit, magically fair.

Here the pilgrim may behold
How the bended cocoa waves
When at eve and morn a breeze
Blows to and from the Carib seas,

How the lush banana leaves
From their braided trunk unfold;
How the mango wears its gold,
And the sceptred aloe's bloom
Glorifies it for the tomb.

When the day has ended quite,
Splendor fills the drooping skies;
All is beauty, naught is night.
Then the Crosses twain arise,
Southward far, above the deep,
And the moon their light outvies.
Hark! the wakened lute and song
That to this fond clime belong,—
All is music, naught is sleep.

Isle of plenty, isle of love!
In the low, encircling plain,
Laboring Afric, loaded wain,
Bearing sweets and spices, move;
On the happy heights above
Love his seat has chosen well,
Dreamful ease and silence dwell,
Life is all entranced, and time
Passes like a tinkling rhyme.

Ah, on those cool heights to dwell
Yielded to the island's spell!
There from some low-whispering mouth
To learn the secret of the South,
Or to watch dark eyes that close
When their sleep the noondays bring,
(List, the palm leaves murmuring!)
And the wind that comes and goes
Smells of every flower that blows.

Or from ocean to descry
Green plantations sloping nigh,
Starry peaks, of beryl hewn,
Whose strong footholds hidden lie
Furlong deep beneath the sea!
Long the mariners wistfully
Landward gaze, and say aright,
"Under sun or under moon
Earth has no more beauteous sight!"

CREOLE LOVER'S SONG

NIGHT wind, whispering wind,
Wind of the Carib sea!
The palms and the still lagoon
Long for thy coming soon;
But first my lady find:
Hasten, nor look behind!
To-night Love's herald be.

The feathery bamboo moves,
The dewy plantains weep;
From the jasmine thickets bear
The scents that are swooning there,
And steal from the orange groves
The breath of a thousand loves
To waft her ere she sleep.

And the lone bird's tender song
That rings from the ceiba tree,
The firefly's light, and the glow
Of the moonlit waters low,—
All things that to night belong
And can do my love no wrong
Bear her this hour for me.

THE CARIB SEA

Speed thee, wind of the deep,
For the cyclone comes in wrath!
The distant forests moan;
Thou hast but an hour thine own,—
An hour thy tryst to keep,
Ere the hounds of tempest leap
And follow upon thy path.

Whisperer, tarry a space!
She waits for thee in the night;
She leans from the casement there
With the star-blooms in her hair,
And a shadow falls like lace
From the fern-tree over her face,
And over her mantle white.

Spirit of air and fire,
To-night my herald be!
Tell her I love her well,
And all that I bid thee, tell,
And fold her ever the nigher
With the strength of my soul's desire,
Wind of the Carib sea!

THE ROSE AND THE JASMINE

Now dies the rippling murmur of the strings
That followed long, half-striving to retake,
The burden of the lover's ended song.
Silence! but we who listened linger yet,
Two of the soul's near portals still unclosed —
Sight and the sense of odor. At our feet,
Beneath the open jalousies, is spread
A copse of leaf and bloom, a knotted wild
Of foliage and purple flowering vines,
With here a dagger-plant to pierce them through,

And there a lone papaya lifting high
Its golden-gourded cresset. Night's high noon
Is luminous; that swooning silvery hour
When the concentrate spirit of the South
Grows visible — so rare, and yet so filled
With tremulous pulsation that it seems
All light and fragrance and ethereal dew.

Two vases — carved from some dark, precious wood,
The red-grained heart of olden trees that cling
To yonder mountain — in the moonlight cast
Their scrolls' deep shadows on the glassy floor.
A proud exotic Rose, brought from the North,
Is set within the one; the other bears
A double Jasmine for its counter-charm.
Here on their thrones, in equal high estate,
The rivals bloom; and both have drunk the dew,
Tending their beauty in the midnight air,
Until their sovereign odors meet and blend,
As voices blend that whisper melody,
Now each distinct, now mingled both in one:

JASMINE

I, like a star, against the woven gloom
Of tresses on Dolores' brow shall rest.

ROSE

And I one happy, happy night shall bloom
Twined in the border of her silken vest.

JASMINE

Throughout our isle the guardian winds deprive
Of all their sweets a hundred common flowers,
To feed my heart with fragrance! Lone they live,
And drop their petals far from trellised bowers.

ROSE

Within the garden-plot whence I was borne
No rifled sisterhood became less fine;
My wealth made not the violet forlorn,
And near me climbed the fearless eglantine.

JASMINE

Who feels my breath recalls the orange court,
The terraced walks that jut upon the sea,
The water in the moonlit bay amort,
The midnight given to longing and to me.

ROSE

Who scents my blossoms dreams of bordered meads
Deep down the hollow of some vale far north,
Where Cuthbert with the fair-haired Hilda pleads,
And overhead the stars of June come forth.

JASMINE

Me with full hands enamored Manuel
Gathers for dark-browed Inez at his side,
And both to love are quickened by my spell,
And chide the day that doth their joys divide.

ROSE

Nay, but all climes, all tender sunlit lands
From whose high places spring the palm or pine,
Desire my gifts to grace the wedded bands,
And every home for me has placed a shrine.

JASMINE

Fold up thy heart, proud virgin, ay, and blush
With all the crimson tremors thou canst vaunt!
My yearning waves of passion onward rush,
And long the lover's wistful memory haunt.

ROSE

Pale temptress, the night's revel be thine own,
Till love shall pall and rapture have its fill!
The morn's fresh light still finds me on a throne
Where care is not, nor blissful pains that kill.

JASMINE

Sweet, sweet my breath, oh, sweet beyond compare!

ROSE

Rare, rare the splendors of my regal crown!

BOTH

Choose which thou wilt, bold lover, yet beware
Lest to a luckless choice thou bendest down!

FERN-LAND

I

HITHER, where a woven roof
Keeps the prying sun aloof
From wonderland,
From the fairies underland, —
Hither, where strange grasses grow
With their curling rootlets set
'Twixt the black roots serpentine,
Laurel roots that twist and twine
Toward the cloven path below
Of some cloud-born rivulet, —
This way enter
Fern-Land, and from rim to centre
All its secrets shall be thine.

II

HERE within the covert see
Fern-Land's mimic forestry;
Royal tree-ferns
Canopy the nestling wee ferns
That with every pointed frond
Lend their lords a duteous ear;
Golden ferns a sunshine make —
Fleck their beauty on the brake;
In their moonlight close beyond
Silver ferns like sprites appear.
Here beholden,
Purple, silver, green, and golden,
Mingle for their own sweet sake.

III

DAY'S sure horologe of flowers
Marks in turn the honeyed hours;
Blossoms dangle,
Lithe lianas twist and tangle;
Here on the lagetta tree
Laboring elves at starlight weave
Filmy bride-veils of its spray,
Shot with the cocuya's ray, —
For in fairy-land we be!
Look, and you shall well believe
Oberon reigneth,
And Titania disdaineth,
Still, to yield her lord his way.

IV

HERE, unseen by grosser light,
Fairy-land, at noon of night
Holidaying,
Sallies forth in fine arraying;

Elfin, sylphide, fay, and gnome
On the dew-tipped ferns disport,
In the festooned creepers swing,
Their light plumage fluttering.
Fern-Land is their ancient home,
Here the monarch holds his court,
Puck abideth;
Here the Queen her changeling hideth,
Ariel doth merrily sing.

V

HERE, when Dian shuns the sky,
Swift the winged watchmen fly, —
Flash their torches
In and out mimosa porches
Till the first pale glint of morn:
Then the little people change
Casque and doublet, robe and sash,
In the twinkling of a lash,
For the magic mantles worn
Warily where mortals range,
And beside us
Now unseen, with glee deride us,
Laugh to scorn our trespass rash.

VI

THEN the gnomes, that change to newts,
Lurk about the tree-fern's roots;
Their commander
Is the frog-mouthed salamander
Who will marshal in the sun
Red-backed lizards from the vines,
Eft and newt from bog and spring, —
Many a crested, horny thing
Sharp-eyed, fearsome, — and that one
With the loathly spotted lines!

Mortal heedeth
Him, whose breath of poison speedeth
Them that chafe the elfin king.

VII

Moths above, that feed on dew,
Flit their wings of gold and blue, —
Fancy guesses
These must be the court-princesses:
Others are in durance pent,
Changed to orchids for their tricks, —
Wantons they, who must remain
All day long in beauteous pain
Till stern Oberon relent,
Pardon grant, and seal affix.
Each repineth
Thus until the monarch dineth
And, content, doth loose her chain.

VIII

Would you had the fine, fine ear
The dragonfly's recall to hear, —
Tiny words
Of the vibrant hummingbirds
That, where bloom convolvuli,
Round the dew-cups whir and hover,
Thrusting each, hour after hour,
His keen bill to heart o' the flower,
As some mounted knight may ply
His long lance, an eager lover,
Through deep sedges,
And athrough the coppice edges,
Fain to reach his lady's bower.

IX

Whilst the emerald lancers poise
In the soft air without noise,

MORGAN

Brake and mould
Hoard their marvels manifold.
There the armored beetles creep,
Shrouding in unseemly fear
Each his shield of chrysoprase
Lest its gleam himself betrays
For our kind to seize and keep
Prisoned in a damsel's ear.
Each one stealeth
Dumbly, and his dull way feeleth
Until starlight shall appear.

x

Step you soft, be mute and wary
Lest you wake the lords of Faery!
Motion rude
Fits not with their solitude:
Else the spider will resent
And the beetle nip you well,
Bête-rouge in your neck will furrow,
Garapata dig his burrow:—
Dread the wasp's swift punishment
And the chegoe's vengeance fell:
Well-defended,
Fairies sleep till day hath ended,—
Leave we Fern-Land and its spell.

MORGAN

Oh, what a set of Vagabundos,
Sons of Neptune, sons of Mars,
Raked from todos otros mundos,
Lascars, Gascons, Portsmouth tars,
Prison mate and dock-yard fellow,
Blades to Meg and Molly dear,

Off to capture Porto Bello
Sailed with Morgan the Buccaneer!

Out they voyaged from Port Royal
(Fathoms deep its ruins be,
Pier and convent, fortress loyal,
Sunk beneath the gaping sea);
On the Spaniard's beach they landed,
Dead to pity, void of fear,—
Round their blood-red flag embanded,
Led by Morgan the Buccaneer.

Dawn till dusk they stormed the castle,
Beat the gates and gratings down;
Then, with ruthless rout and wassail,
Night and day they sacked the town,
Staved the bins its cellars boasted,
Port and Lisbon, tier on tier,
Quaffed to heart's content, and toasted
Harry Morgan the Buccaneer:

Stripped the church and monastery,
Racked the prior for his gold,
With the traders' wives made merry,
Lipped the young and mocked the old,
Diced for hapless señoritas
(Sire and brother bound anear),—
Juanas, Lolas, Manuelitas,
Cursing Morgan the Buccaneer.

Lust and rapine, flame and slaughter,
Forayed with the Welshman grim:
"Take my pesos, spare my daughter!"
"Ha! ha!" roared the devil's limb,
"These shall jingle in our pouches,
She with us shall find good cheer."

"Lash the graybeard till he crouches!"
Shouted Morgan the Buccaneer.

Out again through reef and breaker,
While the Spaniard moaned his fate,
Back they voyaged to Jamaica,
Flush with doubloons, coins of eight,
Crosses wrung from Popish varlets,
Jewels torn from arm and ear,—
Jesu! how the Jews and harlots
Welcomed Morgan the Buccaneer!

CAPTAIN FRANCISCA

Off Maracaibo's wall
The squadron lay:
The dykes are carried all
With storm and shout!
Le Basque and Lolonnois
On land their crews deploy,
Through all that ruthless day
The Spaniards rout.

They sack the captured town
Ere set of sun;
Their blood-red pennons crown
The convent tower:
Then Du Plessis, the bold,
Cries: "Take my share of gold!
For me this pretty one,
This cloister flower!"

Dice, drink, and song, the while
They seek anew
The filibusters' isle,
Tortuga's port.

Swift was the craft that bore
Francisca from her shore;
  Red-handed were its crew
    And grim their sport.

Unbraided fell her hair,
  A tropic cloud;
Seven days, with sob and prayer,
    She mourned the dead;
Like rain her tears fell;
But Du Plessis right well
  By saint and relic vowed
    As on they sped.

Ere past the Mer du Nord
  She smiled apace;
Her dark eyes evermore
    Sought his alone.
Hot wooed the Chevalier;
His outlaw-priest was near:
  Forsworn were home and race,
    She was his own.

Now cruel Lolonnois
  And fierce La Basque
Unlade with wolfish joy
    The cargazon;
Land all their ribald braves,
Captives and naked slaves,
  With many a bale and cask,
    By rapine won;

Armor and altar-plate
  Brought over sea:
Pesos, a countless weight,
    The horde divide—

To each an equal share,
Else blades are in the air!
Cries Du Plessis: "For me,
My ship, and bride!"

They sailed the Mer du Nord,
The Carib Sea,
Whose galleons fled before
The Frenchman's crew;
But, in one deadly fight,
A swivel aimed aright
Brought down young Du Plessis,
Shot through and through.

Wild heart of France, in pride
And ruin bred!
Against a heart he died,
As brave, as free.
Sternly she bade his men
First sink the prize, and then
Name one that in his stead
Their chief should be.

Each red-shirt laid his hand
Upon the Cross,
Swearing, at her command,
Vengeance to wreak;
To scour the blue sea there
And seek the Spaniards' lair,
From Gracias à Dios
To Porto Rique.

His corse the deep she gave,
Her life to hate;
Upon the land and wave
Brought sudden fear:

No bearded Capitan,
Since first their woes began,
(The orphaned niñas prate),
Cost them so dear!

From Maracaibo's Bay
Anon put out
A frigate to waylay
This ranger dark.
It crossed the Mer du Nord,
And, off San Salvador,
Stayed, with defiance stout,
Francisca's barque.

They grappled stern and prow
Till the guns kissed!
Girt like her rovers, now
She bids them board:
The first her blade had shorn
Was her own brother born.
Blindly she smote, nor wist
Whose life-stream poured.

Yet, as he fell, one ball
His sure aim sped.
Her lips the battle-call
Essay in vain.
Then deathful stroke on stroke,
Curses and powder-smoke,
And blood like water shed
Above the twain!

No quarter give or take!
The decks are gore;
Fresh gaps the Spaniards make,
Charging anew:

PANAMA

"Death to the buccaneer!
No more our fleet shall fear,
That sails the Mer du Nord,
This corsair crew!"

— On thy lone strand was made,
San Salvador,
One grave where two were laid
For bane or boon!
The last of all their race,
To each an equal place.
Guards well that sombre shore
The still lagoon.

PANAMA

Two towers the old Cathedral lifts
Above the sea-walled town, —
The wild pine bristles from their rifts,
The runners dangle down;
In either turret, staves in hand,
All day the mongrel ringers stand
And sound, far over bay and land,
The Bells of Panama.

Loudly the cracked bells, overhead,
Of San Francisco ding,
With Santa Ana, La Merced,
Felípe, answering;
Banged all at once, and four times four,
Morn, noon, and night, the more and more
Clatter and clang with huge uproar
The Bells of Panama.

From out their roosts the bellmen see
The red-tiled roofs below, —

The Plaza folk that lazily
To mass and cockpit go,—
Then pound afresh, with clamor fell,
Each ancient, broken, thrice-blest bell,
Till thrice our mouths have cursed as well
The Bells of Panama.

The Cordillera guards the main
As when Pedrarias bore
The cross, the castled flag of Spain,
To the Pacific shore;
The tide still ebbs a league from quay,
The buzzards scour the emptied Bay:
"There 's a heretic to singe to-day,—
Come out! Come out!"—still strive to say
The Bells of Panama.

MARTINIQUE IDYL

Love, the winds long to lure you to their home,
To tempt you on beneath the northern arch!
There, in the swift, bright summer, you and I
May loiter where the elms' deep shadows lie;
There, by our household fire, bid Yule-tide come,
And winter's cold, and every gust of March.

Stay, O stay with me here, and chasten
Your heart still longing to wander more!
Ever the restless winds are winging,
But the white-plumed egrets, skyward-springing,
Over our blue sea hover, and hasten
To light anew on their own dear shore.

The lips grow tired of honey, the cloyed ear
Of music, and of light the eyelids tire.

MARTINIQUE IDYL

I weary of the sky's eternal balm,
The ceaseless droop and rustle of the palm;
Only your whisper, love, constrains me here
From that brave clime I would you might desire.

Cold, ah, cold is the sky, and leaden,
There where earth rounds off to the pole!
Still by kisses the moments number,—
Here are sweetness, and rest, and slumber,
All to lighten and naught to deaden
The heart's low murmur, the captured soul.

Dear, I would have you yearn, amid these sweets,
For the clear breeze that blows from waters gray,—
For some fresh, northern hill-top, overgrown
With bush and bloom and brake to you unknown;
There, while the hidden thrush his song repeats,
The rose shall tinge your cheek the livelong day.

Stay in the clime where living is loving
And the lips make music unaware;
Where copses thrill with the wood-doves' cooing,
And astral moths on the flight are wooing;
While the light colibris poise unmoving,—
Winged Loves that mate in the trembling air.

Nay, love itself will languish in the days
When Summer never doffs his burning helm.
No lasting links to bind the soul are wrought
Where passion takes no deeper cast from thought;
Ah! lend your ear a moment to the lays
Our poets sing you of a trustier realm!

Under the cocoa-fronds that flutter,
Here, where the lush white trumpet-flower
And the curled lianas roof us over,
So that no evil thing discover

The sighs we mingle, the words we utter, —
Here, oh here, let us make our bower!

Love is not perfect, sweet, that like a dream
Flows on without a forecast or a pain;
Some burden must betide to make it strong,
Some toil, to make its briefest bliss seem long, —
Ay, longer than the crossing of a stream
Mist-haunted, lit by moons that surely wane.

Here, for a round of moons unbroken,
A spell that holds shall your loss requite;
The fleet, sweet moments shall pass unreckoned
And all to our constant love be second,
And the fragrant lily shall be our token,
That folds itself on the waves at night.

Yonder, or here, and whether summer's star
Burn overhead, or rains of autumn fall!

Or snows of winter in the frozen North?

Love, never doubt it!

Take me with you forth!
And oh, forget not in that land afar,
I am your summer, — you, my life, my all!

ASTRA CAELI

Over the Carib Sea to-night
The stars hang low and near
From the inexplicable dome, —
Nearer, more close to sight,

Than from the skies which bound the stern gray sea
That girts our northern home.

Aftward the sister Crosses be,
And yonder to the lee
One burning cresset glows — a sphere
With light beyond a new moon's rays,
As if some world of vanished souls shone clear
And straight before our gaze.

Were now his spirit bright, —
Not veiled, nor dumb, —
My brother's, with the smile of years ago,
Hither to glide far down that path of light,
And lift a hand, and say aright, —
"Thou too shalt know
The orb from which I come!"

— Were thus 'twixt star and wave
His voice to reach me on the night-wind's breath,
I would not lightly leave thee, Dear,
Nor them who with thee here
Make of Life's best for me the choice and sum, —
But yet might not bemoan me, as the slave
Condemned, who hears the call to death;
For that strange heralding
Even of itself would answer all, — would prove
Life but a voyage such as this, and bring
To our adventuring
Its gage of the immortal boon,
Promise of after joy and toil and love;
And I would yield me, as the bird takes wing
Knowing its mate must follow sure and soon.

Ay, — but the trackless spirit
Comes not, nor is there utterance or sign
Of all we would divine

Vouchsafed from the unanswering dome :
No presence east or west, —
Only the stars — the restless wondering sea
Bearing us back, from foam-tipped crest to crest,
Toward the one small part ourselves inherit
Of this lone darkling world — and call our home.

SONGS AND BALLADS

THE SINGER

O LARK! sweet lark!
Where learn you all your minstrelsy?
What realms are those to which you fly?
While robins feed their young from dawn till dark,
You soar on high,—
Forever in the sky.

O child! dear child!
Above the clouds I lift my wing
To hear the bells of Heaven ring;
Some of their music, though my flights be wild,
To Earth I bring,
Then let me soar and sing!

SUMMER RAIN

THROUGH the night we heard it fall
Tenderly and musical;
And this morning not a sigh
Of wind uplifts the briony leaves,
But the ashen-tinted sky
Still for earthly turmoil grieves,
While the melody of the rain,
Dropping on the window-pane,
On the lilac and the rose,
Round us all its pleasance throws,
Till our souls are yielded wholly
To its constant melancholy,

And, like the burden of its song,
Passionate moments glide along.

Pinks and hyacinths perfume
All our garden-fronted room;
Hither, close beside me, Love!
Do not whisper, do not move.
Here we two will softly stay,
Side by side, the livelong day.
Lean thy head upon my breast:
Ever shall it give thee rest,
Ever would I gaze to meet
Eyes of thine up-glancing, Sweet!
What enchanted dreams are ours!
While the murmur of the showers
Dropping on the tranquil ground,
Dropping on the leaves and flowers,
Wraps our yearning souls around
In the drapery of its sound.

VOICE OF THE WESTERN WIND

Voice of the western wind!
Thou singest from afar,
Rich with the music of a land
Where all my memories are;
But in thy song I only hear
The echo of a tone
That fell divinely on my ear
In days forever flown.

Star of the western sky!
Thou beamest from afar,
With lustre caught from eyes I knew,
Whose orbs were each a star;

MONTAGU

But, oh, those orbs — too wildly bright —
No more eclipse thine own,
And never shall I find the light
Of days forever flown!

APOLLO

VAINLY, O burning Poets!
Ye wait for his inspiration,
Even as kings of old
Stood by the oracle-gates.
Hasten back, he will say, *hasten back*
To your provinces far away!
There, at my own good time,
Will I send my answer to you.
Are ye not kings of song?
At last the god cometh!
The air runs over with splendor;
The fire leaps high on the altar;
Melodious thunders shake the ground.
Hark to the Delphic responses!
Hark! it is the god!

MONTAGU

QUEEN Katherine of Arragon
In gray Kimbolton dwelt,
A joyous bride, ere bluff King Hal
At Bullen's footstool knelt.

Still in her haughty Spanish eyes
Their childhood's lustre shone,
That lit with love two royal hearts,
And won the English throne.

From gray Kimbolton's castle-gate
She rode, each summer's day,
And blithely led the greenwood chase
With hawk and hound away.

And ever handsome Montagu,
Her Master of the Horse,
To guard his mistress kept her pace
O'er heather, turf, and gorse.

O, who so brave as Montagu
To leap the hedges clear!
And who so fleet as he to find
The coverts of the deer!

And who so wild as Montagu,
To seek his sovereign's love!
More hopeless than a child, who craves
The brightest star above.

Day after day her presence fed
The fever at his heart;
Yet loyally the young knight scorned
To play a traitor's part.

Only, when at her palfrey's side
He bowed him by command,
Lightening her footfall to the earth,
He pressed her dainty hand;

A tender touch, as light as love,
Soft as his heart's desire;
But aye, in Katherine's artless blood,
It woke no answering fire.

King Hal to gray Kimbolton came
Erelong, and true love's sign,

Unused in colder Arragon,
She prayed him to divine:

"Canst tell me, Sire," she said, "what mean
The gentry of your land,
When softly, thus, and thus, they take
And press a lady's hand?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Hal, "but tell me, Chick,
Each answering in course,
Do any press your hand?" "O yes,
My Master of the Horse."

Off to the wars her gallant went,
And pushed the foremost dikes,
And gashed his fair young form against
A score of Flemish pikes.

Heart's blood ebbed fast; but Montagu,
Dipping a finger, wove
These red words in his shield: "Dear Queen,
I perish of your love!"

Kimbolton, after many a year,
Again met Katherine's view:
The banished wife, with half a sigh,
Remembered Montagu.

JEAN PROUVAIRE'S SONG AT THE BARRICADE

"While the men were making cartridges and the women lint; while a large frying-pan, full of melted pewter and lead, destined for the bullet-mould, was smoking over a burning furnace; while the videttes were watching the barricades with arms in their hands; while Enjolras, whom nothing could distract, was watching the videttes, — Combeferre, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly Bossuet, Joly, Bahorel, a few others besides, sought each other and got together, as in the most peaceful days of their student-chats, and in a corner of this wine-shop

changed into a casemate, within two steps of the redoubt which they had thrown up, their carbines, primed and loaded, resting on the back of their chairs, these gallant young men, so near their last hour, began to sing love-rhymes. . . . The hour, the place, these memories of youth recalled, the few stars which began to shine in the sky, the funereal repose of these deserted streets, the imminence of the inexorable event, gave a pathetic charm to these rhymes, murmured in a low tone in the twilight by Jean Prouvaire, who, as we have said, was a sweet poet." *Les Misérables: Saint Denis*, Book XII, chapter vi.

Do you remember our charming times,
When we were both so young, and knew
Of naught on earth that was worth a wish
But love, and to look our best, — we two;

When all your birthdays, added to mine,
A total of forty would not bring,
And when, in our humble and cosey roost,
All, even the Winter, to us was Spring?

Rare days! then prudish Manuel stalked,
Paris a godly life essayed,
Foy thundered, and yes, 't was then a pin
In your bodice pricked my hand that abrayed!

Every one ogled you. At Prado's,
Where you and your briefless barrister dined,
You were so pretty, the roses, I thought,
Turned to look at you from behind.

They seemed to whisper: "How handsome she is!
What wavy tresses! what sweet perfume!
Under her mantle she hides her wings;
Her flower of a bonnet is just in bloom!"

I roamed with you, pressing your dainty arm,
And the passers thought that Love, in play,
Had mated, in unison so sweet,
The gallant April with gentle May.

SONG AT THE BARRICADE

We lived so merrily, all by ourselves,
  On love, — that choice forbidden fruit, —
And never a word my mouth could speak
  But your heart already had followed suit.

The Sorbonne was that bucolic place
  Where night till day my passion throve:
'T is thus that an ardent youngster makes
  The Latin Quarter a Land of Love.

O Place Maubert! O Place Dauphine!
  Sky-parlor reaching heavenward far,
In whose depths, when you drew your stocking on,
  I saw, methought, a shining star.

Hard-learned Plato I 've long forgot:
  Neither Malebranche nor Lamennais
Taught me such faith in Providence
  As the flower which in your bosom lay.

You were my servant and I your slave:
  O golden attic! O joy, at morn,
To lace you — watch you dressing, and viewing
  Your girlish face in that glass forlorn!

Ah! who indeed could ever forget
  The sky and dawn commingling still;
That ribbony, flowery, gauzy glory,
  And Love's sweet nonsense talked at will?

Our garden a pot of tulips was;
  Your petticoat curtained the window-pane;
I took for myself the earthen bowl,
  And passed you a cup of porcelain.

What huge disasters to make us fun!
  Your muff afire; your tippet lost;

And that cherished portrait of Shakespeare, sold,
One hungry evening, at half its cost.

I was a beggar and you were kind:
A kiss from your fair round arms I'd steal,
While the folio-Dante we gayly spread
With a hundred chestnuts, our frugal meal.

And oh! when first my favored mouth
A kiss to your burning lips had given,
You were dishevelled and all aglow;
I, pale with rapture, believed in Heaven.

Do you remember our countless joys,
Those neckerchiefs rumpled every day?
Alas, what sighs from our boding hearts
The infinite skies have borne away!

TOUJOURS AMOUR

PRITHEE tell me, Dimple-Chin,
At what age does Love begin?
Your blue eyes have scarcely seen
Summers three, my fairy queen,
But a miracle of sweets,
Soft approaches, sly retreats,
Show the little archer there,
Hidden in your pretty hair;
When didst learn a heart to win?
Prithee tell me, Dimple-Chin!

"Oh!" the rosy lips reply,
"I can't tell you if I try.
'T is so long I can't remember:
Ask some younger lass than I!"

VIOLET EYES

Tell, O tell me, Grizzled-Face,
Do your heart and head keep pace?
When does hoary Love expire,
When do frosts put out the fire?
Can its embers burn below
All that chill December snow?
Care you still soft hands to press,
Bonny heads to smooth and bless?
When does Love give up the chase?
Tell, O tell me, Grizzled-Face!

"Ah!" the wise old lips reply,
"Youth may pass and strength may die;
But of Love I can't foretoken:
Ask some older sage than I!"

THE TRYST

Sleeping, I dreamed that thou wast mine,
In some ambrosial lovers' shrine.
My lips against thy lips were pressed,
And all our passion was confessed;
So near and dear my darling seemed,
I knew not that I only dreamed.

Waking, this mid and moonlit night,
I clasp thee close by lover's right.
Thou fearest not my warm embrace,
And yet, so like the dream thy face
And kisses, I but half partake
The joy, and know not if I wake.

VIOLET EYES

One can never quite forget
Eyes like yours, May Margaret,

Eyes of dewy violet!
Nothing like them, Margaret,
Save the blossoms newly born
Of the May and of the Morn.

Oft my memory wanders back
To those burning eyes and black,
Whose heat-lightnings once could move
Me to passion, not to love;
Longer in my heart of hearts
Linger those disguisèd arts,
Which, betimes, a hazel pair
Used upon me unaware;
And the wise and tender gray —
Eyes wherewith a saint might pray —
Speak of pledges that endure
And of faith and vigils pure;
But for him who fain would know
All the fire the first can show,
All the art, or friendship fast,
Of the second and the last, —
And would gain a subtler worth,
Part of Heaven, part of earth, —
He these mingled rays can find
In but one immortal kind:
In those eyes of violet,
In *your* eyes, May Margaret!

AT TWILIGHT

The sunset darkens in the west,
The sea-gulls haunt the bay,
And far and high the swallows fly
To watch the dying day.
Now where is she that once with me
The rippling waves would list?

AUTUMN SONG

And O for the song I loved so long,
  And the darling lips I kist!

Yon twinkling sail may whiter gleam
  Than falcon's snowy wing,
Her lances far the evening-star
  Beyond the waves may fling;
Float on, ah float, enchanted boat,
  Bear true hearts o'er the main,
But I shall guide thy helm no more,
  Nor whisper love again!

AUTUMN SONG

No clouds are in the morning sky,
  The vapors hug the stream, —
Who says that life and love can die
  In all this northern gleam?
At every turn the maples burn,
  The quail is whistling free,
The partridge whirs, and the frosted burs
  Are dropping for you and me.
    Ho! hilly ho! heigh O!
      Hilly ho!
In the clear October morning.

Along our path the woods are bold,
  And glow with ripe desire;
The yellow chestnut showers its gold,
  The sumachs spread their fire;
The breezes feel as crisp as steel,
  The buckwheat tops are red:
Then down the lane, love, scurry again,
  And over the stubble tread!
    Ho! hilly ho! heigh O!
      Hilly ho!
In the clear October morning.

WHAT THE WINDS BRING

WHICH is the Wind that brings the cold?
  The North-Wind, Freddy, and all the snow;
And the sheep will scamper into the fold
  When the North begins to blow.

Which is the Wind that brings the heat?
  The South-Wind, Katy; and corn will grow,
And peaches redden for you to eat,
  When the South begins to blow.

Which is the Wind that brings the rain?
  The East-Wind, Arty; and farmers know
That cows come shivering up the lane
  When the East begins to blow.

Which is the Wind that brings the flowers?
  The West-Wind, Bessy; and soft and low
The birdies sing in the summer hours
  When the West begins to blow.

THE SONGSTER

A MIDSUMMER CAROL

I

WITHIN our summer hermitage
  I have an aviary, —
'T is but a little, rustic cage,
That holds a golden-winged Canary,
A bird with no companion of his kind.
    But when the warm south-wind
    Blows, from rathe meadows, over
    The honey-scented clover,

I hang him in the porch, that he may hear
The voices of the bobolink and thrush,
The robin's joyous gush,
The bluebird's warble, and the tunes of all
Glad matin songsters in the fields anear.
Then, as the blithe responses vary,
And rise anew and fall,
In every hush
He answers them again,
With his own wild, reliant strain,
As if he breathed the air of sweet Canary.

II

Bird, bird of the golden wing,
Thou lithe, melodious thing!
Where hast thy music found?
What fantasies of vale and vine,
Of glades where orchids intertwine,
Of palm-trees, garlanded and crowned,
And forests flooded deep with sound,—
What high imagining
Hath made this carol thine?
By what instinct art thou bound
To all rare harmonies that be
In those green islands of the sea,
Where thy radiant, wildwood kin
Their madrigals at morn begin,
Above the rainbow and the roar
Of the long billow from the Afric shore?

Asking other guerdon
None, than Heaven's light,
Holding thy crested head aright,
Thy melody's sweet burden
Thou dost proudly utter,
With many an ecstatic flutter

And ruffle of thy tawny throat
For each delicious note.
— Art thou a waif from Paradise,
In some fine moment wrought
By an artist of the skies,
Thou winged, cherubic Thought?

Bird of the amber beak,
Bird of the golden wing!
Thy dower is thy carolling;
Thou hast not far to seek
Thy bread, nor needest wine
To make thine utterance divine;
Thou art canopied and clothed
And unto Song betrothed!
In thy lone aërial cage
Thou hast thine ancient heritage;
There is no task-work on thee laid
But to rehearse the ditties thou hast made;
Thou hast a lordly store,
And, though thou scatterest them free,
Art richer than before,
Holding in fee
The glad domain of minstrelsy.

III

Brave songster, bold Canary!
Thou art not of thy listeners wary,
Art not timorous, nor chary
Of quaver, trill, and tone,
Each perfect and thine own;
But renewest, shrill or soft,
Thy greeting to the upper skies,
Chanting thy latest song aloft
With no tremor or disguise.
Thine is a music that defies

The envious rival near;
Thou hast no fear
Of the day's vogue, the scornful critic's sneer.

Would, O wisest bard, that now
I could cheerly sing as thou!
Would I might chant the thoughts which on me throng
For the very joy of song!
Here, on the written page,
I falter, yearning to impart
The vague and wandering murmur of my heart,
Haply a little to assuage
This human restlessness and pain,
And half forget my chain:
Thou, unconscious of thy cage,
Showerest music everywhere;
Thou hast no care
But to pour out the largesse thou hast won
From the south-wind and the sun;
There are no prison-bars
Betwixt thy tricksy spirit and the stars.

When from its delicate clay
Thy little life shall pass away,
Thou wilt not meanly die,
Nor voiceless yield to silence and decay;
But triumph still in art
And act thy minstrel-part,
Lifting a last, long pæan
To the unventured empyrean.
—So bid the world go by,
And they who list to thee aright,
Seeing thee fold thy wings and fall, shall say:
"The Songster perished of his own delight!"

STANZAS FOR MUSIC

(FROM AN UNFINISHED DRAMA)

THOU art mine, thou hast given thy word;
Close, close in my arms thou art clinging;
Alone for my ear thou art singing
A song which no stranger hath heard:
But afar from me yet, like a bird,
Thy soul, in some region unstirred,
On its mystical circuit is winging.

Thou art mine, I have made thee mine own;
Henceforth we are mingled forever:
But in vain, all in vain, I endeavor —
Though round thee my garlands are thrown,
And thou yieldest thy lips and thy zone —
To master the spell that alone
My hold on thy being can sever.

Thou art mine, thou hast come unto me!
But thy soul, when I strive to be near it —
The innermost fold of thy spirit —
Is as far from my grasp, is as free,
As the stars from the mountain-tops be,
As the pearl, in the depths of the sea,
From the portionless king that would wear it.

THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRDS

WHITHER away, Robin,
Whither away?
Is it through envy of the maple-leaf,
Whose blushes mock the crimson of thy breast,
Thou wilt not stay?
The summer days were long, yet all too brief

SONG FROM A DRAMA

The happy season thou hast been our guest:
Whither away?

Whither away, Bluebird,
Whither away?
The blast is chill, yet in the upper sky
Thou still canst find the color of thy wing,
The hue of May.
Warbler, why speed thy southern flight? ah, why,
Thou too, whose song first told us of the Spring?
Whither away?

Whither away, Swallow,
Whither away?
Canst thou no longer tarry in the North,
Here, where our roof so well hath screened thy nest?
Not one short day?
Wilt thou — as if thou human wert — go forth
And wanton far from them who love thee best?
Whither away?

SONG FROM A DRAMA

I KNOW not if moonlight or starlight
Be soft on the land and the sea, —
I catch but the near light, the far light,
Of eyes that are burning for me;
The scent of the night, of the roses,
May burden the air for thee, Sweet, —
'T is only the breath of thy sighing
I know, as I lie at thy feet.

The winds may be sobbing or singing,
Their touch may be fervent or cold,
The night-bells may toll or be ringing, —
I care not, while thee I enfold!

The feast may go on, and the music
Be scattered in ecstasy round, —
Thy whisper, "I love thee! I love thee!"
Hath flooded my soul with its sound.

I think not of time that is flying,
How short is the hour I have won,
How near is this living to dying,
How the shadow still follows the sun;
There is naught upon earth, no desire,
Worth a thought, though 't were had by a sign!
I love thee! I love thee! bring nigher
Thy spirit, thy kisses, to mine.

THE SUN-DIAL

"Horas non numero nisi serenas"

ONLY the sunny hours
Are numbered here, —
No winter-time that lowers,
No twilight drear.
But from a golden sky
When sunbeams fall,
Though the bright moments fly, —
They 're counted all.

My heart its transient woe
Remembers not!
The ills of long ago
Are half forgot;
But Childhood's round of bliss,
Youth's tender thrill,
Hope's whisper, Love's first kiss, —
They haunt me still!

Sorrows are everywhere,
Joys — all too few!

MADRIGAL

Have we not had our share
  Of pleasure too?
No Past the glad heart cowers,
  No memories dark;
Only the sunny hours
  The dial mark.

MADRIGAL

DORUS TO LYCORIS, WHO REPROVED HIM FOR INCONSTANCY

WHY should I constant be?
The bird in yonder tree,
  This leafy summer,
Hath not his last year's mate,
Nor dreads to venture fate
  With a new-comer.

Why should I fear to sip
The sweets of each red lip?
  In every bower
The roving bee may taste
(Lest aught should run to waste)
  Each fresh-blown flower.

The trickling rain doth fall
Upon us one and all;
  The south-wind kisses
The saucy milkmaid's cheek,
The nun's, demure and meek,
  Nor any misses.

Then ask no more of me
That I should constant be
  Nor eke desire it;
Take not such idle pains

To hold our love in chains,
Nor coax, nor hire it.

Be all things in thyself,—
A sprite, a tricksy elf,
Forever changing,
So that thy latest mood
May ever bring new food
To Fancy ranging.

Forget what thou wast first,
And as I loved thee erst
In soul and feature,
I 'll love thee out of mind
When each new morn shall find
Thee a new creature.

NOCTURNE

The silent world is sleeping,
And spirits hover nigh,
With downward pinions keeping
Our love from mortal eye,
Nor any ear of Earth can hear
The heart-beat and the sigh.

Now no more the twilight bird
Showers his triple notes around;
In the dewy paths is heard
No rude footfall's sound.
In the stillness I await
Thy coming late,
In the dusk would lay my heart
Close to thine own, and say how dear thou art!

O life! O rarest hour!
When the dark world onward rolls,

And the fiery planets drift,
  Then from our commingled souls
Clouds of passion and of power,
  Flames of incense, lift!

Come, for the world is turning
  To meet the morning star!
Answer my spirit's yearning
  And seek the arms that call thee from afar:
Let them close — ah, let them close
Around thee now, and lure thee to repose.

1878.

GUESTS AT YULE

Noël! Noël!
Thus sounds each Christmas bell
  Across the winter snow.
But what are the little footprints all
That mark the path from the church-yard wall?
They are those of the children waked to-night
From sleep by the Christmas bells and light:
  Ring sweetly, chimes! Soft, soft, my rhymes!
  Their beds are under the snow.

Noël! Noël!
Carols each Christmas bell.
  What are the wraiths of mist
That gather anear the window-pane
Where the winter frost all day has lain?
They are soulless elves, who fain would peer
Within, and laugh at our Christmas cheer:
  Ring fleetly, chimes! Swift, swift, my rhymes!
  They are made of the mocking mist.

Noël! Noël!
Cease, cease, each Christmas bell!

Under the holly bough,
Where the happy children throng and shout,
What shadow seems to flit about?
Is it the mother, then, who died
Ere the greens were sere last Christmas-tide?
Hush, falling chimes! Cease, cease, my rhymes!
The guests are gathered now.

1882.

THE PILGRIMS

O PILGRIM from the Indies!
O guest from out the North,
Where low and dun the midnight sun
Upon the wave rides forth!
What country is most dear of all
Beneath the heaven blue?
The dearest land is one's own land,
Go search the wide world through.

O know you not that henceforth
All countries are as one?
Ere summer fail, the world shall hail
Its golden year begun.
But still each pilgrim answering names
The clime that gave him birth:
One's own land is the dearest land
Of all fair lands on earth.

Children's Song,
Columbian Exposition, 1893.

FALSTAFF'S SONG

WHERE 's he that died o' Wednesday?
What place on earth hath he?
A tailor's yard beneath, I wot,
Where worms approaching be;

For the wight that died o' Wednesday,
Just laid the light below,
Is dead as the varlet turned to clay
A score of years ago.

Where 's he that died o' Sabba' day?
Good Lord, I 'd not be he!
The best of days is foul enough
From this world's fare to flee;
And the saint that died o' Sabba' day,
With his grave turf yet to grow,
Is dead as the sinner brought to pray
A hundred years ago.

Where 's he that died o' yesterday?
What better chance hath he
To clink the can and toss the pot
When this night's junkets be?
For the lad that died o' yesterday
Is just as dead — ho! ho! —
As the whoreson knave men laid away
A thousand years ago.

PROVENÇAL LOVERS

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

Within the garden of Beaucaire
He met her by a secret stair, —
The night was centuries ago.
Said Aucassin, "My love, my pet,
These old confessors vex me so!
They threaten all the pains of hell
Unless I give you up, ma belle"; —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"Now, who should there in Heaven be
To fill your place, ma très-douce mie?

To reach that spot I little care!
There all the droning priests are met;
All the old cripples, too, are there
That unto shrines and altars cling
To filch the Peter-pence we bring";—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"There are the barefoot monks and friars
With gowns well tattered by the briars,
The saints who lift their eyes and whine:
I like them not — a starveling set!
Who 'd care with folk like these to dine?
The other road 't were just as well
That you and I should take, ma belle!" —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"To purgatory I would go
With pleasant comrades whom we know,
Fair scholars, minstrels, lusty knights
Whose deeds the land will not forget,
The captains of a hundred fights,
The men of valor and degree:
We 'll join that gallant company," —
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"There, too, are jousts and joyance rare,
And beauteous ladies debonair,
The pretty dames, the merry brides,
Who with their wedded lords coquette
And have a friend or two besides, —
And all in gold and trappings gay,
With furs, and crests in vair and gray"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"Sweet players on the cithern strings,
And they who roam the world like kings,
Are gathered there, so blithe and free!
Pardie! I 'd join them now, my pet,

If you went also, ma douce mie!
The joys of heaven I 'd forego
To have you with me there below,"—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

1878.

THE WEDDING-DAY

I

SWEETHEART, name the day for me
When we two shall wedded be.
Make it ere another moon,
While the meadows are in tune,
And the trees are blossoming,
And the robins mate and sing.
Whisper, love, and name a day
In this merry month of May.

No, no, no,
You shall not escape me so!
Love will not forever wait;
Roses fade when gathered late.

II

Fie, for shame, Sir Malcontent!
How can time be better spent
Than in wooing? I would wed
When the clover blossoms red,
When the air is full of bliss.
And the sunshine like a kiss.
If you 're good I 'll grant a boon:
You shall have me, sir, in June.

Nay, nay, nay,
Girls for once should have their way!

If you love me, wait till June:
Rosebuds wither, picked too soon.
1878.

THE DUTCH PATROL

When Christmas-Eve is ended,
Just at the noon of night,
Rare things are seen by mortal een
That have the second sight.
In St. Mark's church-yard then
They see the shape arise
Of him who ruled Nieuw Amsterdam
And here in slumber lies.

His face, beneath the close black cap,
Has a martial look and grim;
On either side his locks fall wide
To the broad collar's rim;
His sleeves are slashed; the velvet coat
Is fashioned Hollandese
Above his fustian breeches, trimmed
With scarf-knots at the knees.

His leg of flesh is hosed in silk;
His wooden leg is bound,
As well befits a conqueror's,
With silver bands around.
He reads the lines that mark
His tablet on the wall,
Where boldly Petrus Stuyvesant
Stands out beyond them all.

"'T is well!" he says, and sternly smiles,
"They hold our memory dear;
Nor rust nor moss hath crept across;
'T will last this many a year."

Then down the path he strides,
And through the iron gate,
Where the sage Nine Men, his councillors,
Their Governor await.

Here are Van der Donck and Van Cortlandt,
A triplet more of Vans,
And Hendrick Kip of the haughty lip,
And Govert Loockermans,
Jan Jansen Dam, and Jansen,
Of whom our annals tell, —
All risen this night their lord to greet
At sound of the Christmas bell.

Nine lusty forms in linsey coats,
Puffed sleeves and ample hose!
Each burgher smokes a Flemish pipe
To warm his ancient nose;
The smoke-wreaths rise like mist,
The smokers all are mute,
Yet all, with pipes thrice waving slow,
Brave Stuyvesant salute.

Then into ranks they fall,
And step out three by three,
And he of the wooden leg and staff
In front walks solemnly.
Along their wonted course
The phantom troop patrol,
To see how fares Nieuw Amsterdam,
And what the years unroll.

Street after street and mile on mile,
From river bound to bound,
From old St. Mark's to Whitehall Point,
They foot the limits round;
From Maiden Lane to Corlaer's Hook
The Dutchmen's pijpen glow,

But never a word from their lips is heard,
And none their passing know.

Ere the first streak of dawn
St. Mark's again they near,
And by a vault the Nine Men halt,
Their Governor's voice to hear.
"Mynheeren," he says, "ye see
Each year our borders spread!
So, one by one, the landmarks gone,
And marvels come instead!

"Not even a windmill left,
Nor a garden-plot we knew,
And but a paling marks the spot
Where erst my pear-tree grew.
Our walks are wearier still,—
Perchance and it were best,
So little of worth is left on earth,
To break no more our rest?"

Thus speaks old Petrus doubtfully
And shakes his valiant head,
When — on the roofs a sound of hoofs,
A rattling, pattering tread!
The bells of reindeer tinkle,
The Dutchmen plainly spy
St. Nicholas, who drives his team
Across the roof-tops nigh.

"Beshrew me for a craven!"
Cries Petrus — "All goes well!
Our patron saint still makes his round
At sound of the Christmas bell.
So long as staunch St. Nicholas
Shall guard these houses tall,

There shall come no harm from hostile arm —
No evil chance befall!

"The yongens and the meisjes
Shall have their hosen filled;
The butcher and the baker,
And every honest guild,
Shall merrily thrive and flourish;
Good-night, and be of cheer;
We may safely lay us down again
To sleep another year!"

Once more the pipes are waved,
Stout Petrus gives the sign,
The misty smoke enfolds them round,—
Him and his burghers nine.
All, when the cloud has lifted,
Have vanished quite away,
And the crowing cock and steeple clock
Proclaim 't is Christmas-Day.

1882.

AARON BURR'S WOOING

From the commandant's quarters on Westchester height
The blue hills of Ramapo lie in full sight;
On their slope gleam the gables that shield his heart's queen,
But the redcoats are wary — the Hudson 's between.
Through the camp runs a jest: "There 's no moon —
't will be dark;
'T is odds little Aaron will go on a spark!"
And the toast of the troopers is: "Pickets, lie low,
And good luck to the colonel and Widow Prevost!"

Eight miles to the river he gallops his steed,
Lays him bound in the barge, bids his escort make speed,

Loose their swords, sit athwart, through the fleet reach yon
shore,
Not a word — not a plash of the thick-muffled oar!
Once across, once again in the seat and away —
Five leagues are soon over when love has the say;
And "Old Put" and his rider a bridle-path know
To the Hermitage manor of Madame Prevost.

Lightly done! but he halts in the grove's deepest glade,
Ties his horse to a birch, trims his cue, slings his blade,
Wipes the dust and the dew from his smooth, handsome face,
With the 'kerchief she broidered and bordered in lace;
Then slips through the box-rows and taps at the hall,
Sees the glint of a waxlight, a hand white and small,
And the door is unbarred by herself all aglow —
Half in smiles, half in tears — Theodosia Prevost.

Alack for the soldier that 's buried and gone!
What 's a volley above him, a wreath on his stone,
Compared with sweet life and a wife for one's view
Like this dame, ripe and warm in her India fichu?
She chides her bold lover, yet holds him more dear,
For the daring that brings him a night-rider here;
British gallants by day through her doors come and go,
But a Yankee 's the winner of Theo Prevost.

Where 's the widow or maid with a mouth to be kist,
When Burr comes a-wooing, that long would resist?
Lights and wine on the beaufet, the shutters all fast,
And "Old Put" stamps in vain till an hour has flown past —
But an hour, for eight leagues must be covered ere day;
Laughs Aaron, "Let Washington frown as he may,
When he hears of me next, in a raid on the foe,
He 'll forgive this night's tryst with the Widow Prevost!"

1886.

CENTURIA

(TWELFTH NIGHT CHORUS, CENTURY ASSOCIATION)

THE burthen is all that there is of this song,
Centuria!
Let it sound through the halls where our memories throng—
Where thy dead and thy living commingled belong;
Centuria, Centuria, vivat Centuria!

Let it sound till the wise and the gentle and brave,
Centuria,
Come back from the vale where their soft grasses wave,
And list to our revel and join in the stave;
Centuria, Centuria, vivat Centuria!

For the pen, lute and gown, and the iris-hued sky,
Centuria,
Were theirs, and are ours while the nights still go by
With song, wit and wassail, and true hearts anigh.
Centuria, Centuria, vivat Centuria!

Then love as they loved when thine eldest was young,
Centuria!
O the comrades that gossiped and painted and sung,
O the smoke-cloud that lingers their places among!
Centuria, Centuria, vivat Centuria!

And sing as they 'll sing in thy fair years untold,
Centuria,
Strong hearts that shall follow, as tender and bold;
We may fade, we shall pass, but thou growest not old;
Centuria, Centuria, vivat Centuria!

1892.

VARIOUS POEMS

THE DESCENT INTO THE CRATER

POPOCATAPETL

(From "The Sulphur Gatherers," an unpublished early poem.)

THEN, shuddering an instant, with the fear
That chills the bravest glancing unawares
From dreadful heights, Montaña in his crate
Clung fast, and crouched, and bade them lower away;
And the frail car, descending slowly, swung
Far from the cliff, — as the aërial nest,
Which the red oriole has shrewdly built,
Swings pendulous from the extremest bough
Of some huge elm, sweeping in dizzy curves
This way and that, and eddying thundergusts
Whirl it with snap and twist, but still it clings
Through all the tempest, even so the knight,
Sheer in mid air, swung over all that depth,
Whirled with the cordage till his brain grew sick,
But clinging still; and still they lowered him
By shadowy lines of chasm, cave, and crag;
And cave and crag like shadows glided up,
Blurred as in dismal visions of the night,
When down some unknown pit the dreamer falls
Helpless and hopeless. Down, still down. Above,
His comrades' voices were no longer heard.
Down, like the birdsmen of the isle, who swing,
Hunting the eider's plumage, from the holms
Of sea-girt Orkney, or the perilous bluffs
Of Stromoe, black above the roaring main;
Down by the rended vents of ancient fires,
And where the genii of the mountain hide,

Darkling with all the secrets of the gnomes.
The lambent, ambient lava far below
Grew hot, and broadened like the mouth of hell
Yawning for prey; and poisonous, floating fumes
Steamed over him, till, at the last, a puff,
Noisome and dense, smothered his breath so long
The knight was stifled; round his heart he felt
The weight of death, and dropt within his crate
Fainting; but even then it struck firm earth.
The sulphurous vapor coiled, and fled away;
And sight and sound came to him where he stood,
There on the jagged ledges, half-way hung
Betwixt the furnace and the crater's rim.

And lo! beneath, and piled on either side,
A drift of brimstone, fallen like the snow
From those hot clouds; shining before his eyes,
Yellow and bright and crystal-flaked, it lay,
More worth than what it seemed like, powdered gold.

Then, without pause, he labored with the spade
Till the wide crate was full; while, far above,
The men-at-arms peered from the outmost cliff,
Watching the work, and, when the crate was full,
Drew up and emptied it and let it down;
So three times drew it up and lowered it;
But the third time Montaña stept within,
And signalled. So they lifted him again,
Past shadowy lines of chasm, cave, and crag,
Up, till the sky seemed nearer than the gulf
Where even to look was ruin; but the knight
Held to the summit, where they drew him in
To light and life. Thus was the brave deed done.

RESTRAINT

I

Poet, in thy sacred verse
Nothing light or mean rehearse,
Nor its woven text employ
With thy common grief and joy.
Thoughts the unanointed share
Need have not of raiment rare,
But in prose may range at will
And be fitly clothen still.

II

Keep the fabric of thine art
As a precious thing apart —
Such a robe as only may
Wrap one on a holy day;
If at all its folds be thrown
Round experience thine own,
Let it grace in argent white
Thy most rapturous delight,
Or in darkest sable show
Deeper woes than others know,
Lest the mantle, lightly worn,
Bring thy trifling soul to scorn.

III

Let thy skill no more invest
Listless fancy, mocking jest,
Fashion of the fleeting day,
Shallow love and idle play,
Nor the wisdom, poor and plain,
Of a dull, didactic brain.
Its adornment should enfold
Thought as rich and fine as gold.

That, which to the base of birth
Were a guise of little worth,
Shall, through thy regard intense,
Gain from all men reverence;
Honor it and thou shalt see
It will honor bring to thee.

IV

SINGER, though on wings of morn
Thou at will art swiftly borne,
Use them not for every quest;
Ruffle not their folded rest
That thy daily sport and toil
May be lifted from the soil.
Even the winged angels walk
Side by side in pleasant talk,
And with loitering footsteps move
Through the valleys fair with love;
But anon, commissioned far
Light to strew from star to star,
Spread their plumes and soar on high,
Bearing glory through the sky!

HELIOTROPE

I WALK in the morning twilight,
Along a garden slope,
To the shield of moss encircling
My beautiful Heliotrope.

O sweetest of all the flowerets
That bloom where angels tread!
But never such marvellous odor
From heliotrope was shed,

As the passionate exhalation,
The dew of celestial wine,

That floats in tremulous languor
  Around this darling of mine.

For, only yester-even,
  I saw the dearest scene!
I heard the delicate footfall,
  The step of my love, my queen.

Along the walk she glided:
  I made no sound nor sign,
But ever, at the turning
  Of her star-white neck divine,

I shrunk in the shade of the cypress,
  And crouched in the swooning grass,
Like some Arcadian shepherd
  To see an Oread pass.

But when she came to the border
  At the end of the garden-slope,
She bent, like a rose-tree, over
  That beautiful Heliotrope.

The cloud of its subtile fragrance
  Entwined her in its wreath,
And all the while commingled
  With the incense of her breath.

And so she glistened onward,
  Far down the long parterre,
Beside the statue of Hesper,
  And a hundred times more fair.

But ah! her breath had added
  The perfume that I find
In this, the sweetest of flowerets,
  And the paragon of its kind.

I drink deep draughts of its nectar;
I faint with love and hope!
Oh, what did she whisper to you,
My beautiful Heliotrope?

HOPE DEFERRED

Bring no more flowers and books and precious things!
O speak no more of our beloved Art,
Of summer haunts, — melodious wanderings
In leafy refuge from this weary mart!
Surely such thoughts were dear unto my heart;
Now every word a newer sadness brings!
Thus oft some forest-bird, caged far apart
From verdurous freedom, droops his careless wings,
Nor craves for more than food from day to day;
So long bereft of wildwood joy and song,
Hopeless of all he dared to hope so long,
The music born within him dies away;
Even the song he loved becomes a pain,
Full-freighted with a yearning all in vain.

A MOTHER'S PICTURE

She seemed an angel to our infant eyes!
Once, when the glorifying moon revealed
Her who at evening by our pillow kneeled, —
Soft-voiced and golden-haired, from holy skies
Flown to her loves on wings of Paradise, —
We looked to see the pinions half concealed.
The Tuscan vines and olives will not yield
Her back to me, who loved her in this wise,
And since have little known her, but have grown
To see another mother, tenderly
Watch over sleeping children of my own.
Perchance the years have changed her: yet alone

This picture lingers; still she seems to me
The fair young angel of my infancy.

AMAVI

I LOVED: and in the morning sky,
A magic castle upward grew!
Cloud-haunted turrets pointing high
Forever to the dreamy blue;
Bright fountains leaping through and through
The golden sunshine; on the air
Gay banners streaming; — never drew
Painter or poet scene more fair.

And in that castle I would live,
And in that castle I would die;
And there, in curtained bowers, would give
Heart-warm responses, sigh for sigh;
There, when but one sweet face was nigh,
The hours should lightly move along,
And ripple, as they glided by,
Like stanzas of an antique song.

O foolish heart! O young romance,
That faded with the noonday sun!
Alas, for gentle dalliance,
For life-long pleasures never won!
O for a season dead and gone!
A wizard time, which then did seem
Only a prelude, leading on
To sweeter portions of the dream.

She died, — nor wore my orange flowers: —
No longer, in the morning sky,
That magic castle lifts its towers
Which shone, awhile, so lustrously.

Torn are the bannerols, and dry
The silver fountains in its halls;
But the drear sea, with endless sigh,
Moans round and over the crumbled walls.

Let the winds blow! let the white surge
Ever among those ruins wail!
Its moaning is a welcome dirge
For wishes that could not avail.
Let the winds blow! a fiercer gale
Is wild within me! what may quell
That sullen tempest? I must sail
Whither, O whither, who can tell!

THE TEST

Seven women loved him. When the wrinkled pall
Enwrapt him from their unfulfilled desire
(Death, pale, triumphant rival, conquering all,)

They came, for that last look, around his pyre.
One strewed white roses, on whose leaves were hung
Her tears, like dew; and in discreet attire

Warbled her tuneful sorrow. Next among
The group, a fair-haired virgin moved serenely,
Whose saintly heart no vain repinings wrung,

Reached the calm dust, and there, composed and queenly,
Gazed, but the missal trembled in her hand:
"That's with the past," she said, "nor may I meanly

Give way to tears!" and passed into the land.
The third hung feebly on the portals, moaning,
With whitened lips, and feet that stood in sand,

So weak they seemed, — and all her passion owning.
The fourth, a ripe, luxurious maiden, came,
Half for such homage to the dead atoning

By smiles on one who fanned a later flame
In her slight soul, her fickle steps attended.
The fifth and sixth were sisters; at the same

Wild moment both above the image bended,
And with immortal hatred each on each
Glared, and therewith her exultation blended,

To know the dead had 'scaped the other's reach!
Meanwhile, through all the words of anguish spoken,
One lowly form had given no sound of speech,

Through all the signs of woe, no sign nor token;
But when they came to bear him to his rest,
They found her beauty paled, — her heart was broken:

And in the Silent Land his shade confest
That she, of all the seven, loved him best.

ESTELLE

"How came he mad?" — HAMLET.

OF all the beautiful demons who fasten on human hearts
To fetter the bodies and souls of men with exquisite, mocking arts,
The cruellest, and subtlest, and fairest to mortal sight,
Is surely a woman called Estelle, who tortures me day and night.

The first time that I saw her she passed with sweet lips mute,
As if in scorn of the vacant praise of those who made her suit;

A hundred lustres flashed and shone as she rustled through
the crowd,
And a passion seized me for her there, — so passionless and
proud.

The second time that I saw her she met me face to face;
Her bending beauty answered my bow in a tremulous mo-
ment's space;
With an upward glance that instantly fell she read me
through and through,
And found in me something worth her while to idle with
and subdue;

Something, I know not what: perhaps the spirit of eager
youth,
That named her a queen of queens at once, and loved her
in very truth;
That threw its pearl of pearls at her feet, and offered her,
in a breath,
The costliest gift a man can give from his cradle to his death.

The third time that I saw her — this woman called Estelle —
She passed her milk-white arm through mine and dazzled
me with her spell;
A blissful fever thrilled my veins, and there, in the moon-
beams white,
I yielded my soul to the fierce control of that maddening
delight!

And at many a trysting afterwards she wove my heart-
strings round
Her delicate fingers, twisting them, and chanting low as she
wound;
The rune she sang rang sweet and clear like the chime of a
witch's bell;
Its echo haunts me even now, with the word, Estelle!
Estelle!

Ah, then, as a dozen before me had, I lay at last at her feet,
And she turned me off with a calm surprise when her triumph was all complete:
It made me wild, the stroke which smiled so pitiless out of her eyes,
Like lightning fallen, in clear noonday, from cloudless and bluest skies!

The whirlwind followed upon my brain and beat my thoughts to rack:
Who knows the many a month I lay ere memory floated back?
Even now, I tell you, I wonder whether this woman called Estelle
Is flesh and blood, or a beautiful lie, sent up from the depths of hell.

For at night she stands where the pallid moon streams into this grated cell,
And only gives me that mocking glance when I speak her name — *Estelle!*
With the old resistless longing often I strive to clasp her there,
But she vanishes from my open arms and hides I know not where.

And I hold that if she were human she could not fly like the wind,
But her heart would flutter against my own, in spite of her scornful mind:
Yet, oh! she is not a phantom, since devils are not so bad
As to haunt and torture a man long after their tricks have made him mad!

EDGED TOOLS

WELL, Helen, quite two years have flown
Since that enchanted, dreamy night,
When you and I were left alone,
And wondered whether they were right
Who said that each the other loved;
And thus debating, yes and no,
And half in earnest, as it proved,
We bargained to pretend 't was so.

Two sceptic children of the world,
Each with a heart engraven o'er
With broken love-knots, quaintly curled,
Of hot flirtations held before;
Yet, somehow, either seemed to find,
This time, a something more akin
To that young, natural love, — the kind
Which comes but once, and breaks us in.

What sweetly stolen hours we knew,
And frolics perilous as gay!
Though lit in sport, Love's taper grew
More bright and burning day by day.
We knew each heart was only lent,
The other's ancient scars to heal:
The very thought a pathos blent
With all the mirth we tried to feel.

How bravely, when the time to part
Came with the wanton season's close,
Though nature with our mutual art
Had mingled more than either chose,
We smothered Love, upon the verge
Of folly, in one last embrace,

And buried him without a dirge,
And turned, and left his resting-place.

Yet often (tell me what it means!)
His spirit steals upon me here,
Far, far away from all the scenes
His little lifetime held so dear;
He comes: I hear a mystic strain
In which some tender memory lies;
I dally with your hair again;
I catch the gleam of violet eyes.

Ah, Helen! how have matters been
Since those rude obsequies, with you?
Say, is my partner in the sin
A sharer of the penance too?
Again the vision 's at my side:
I drop my head upon my breast,
And wonder if he really died,
And why his spirit will not rest.

1861

ANONYMA

HER CONFESSION

If I had been a rich man's girl,
With my tawny hair, and this wanton art
Of lifting my eyes in the evening whirl
And looking into another's heart;
Had love been mine at birth, and friends
Caressing and guarding me night and day,
With doctors to watch my finger-ends,
And a parson to teach me how to pray;

If I had been reared as others have,—
With but a tithe of these looks, which came

From my reckless mother, now in her grave,
And the father who grudged me even his name,—
Why, I should have station and tender care,
Should ruin men in the high-bred way,
Passionless, smiling at their despair,
And marrying where my vantage lay.

As it is, I must have love and dress,
Jewelled trinkets, and costly food,
For I was born for plenteousness,
Music and flowers, and all things good.
To that same father I owe some thanks,
Seeing, at least, that blood will tell,
And keep me ever above the ranks
Of those who wallow where they fell.

True, there are weary, weary days
In the great hotel where I make my lair,
Where I meet the men with their brutal praise,
Or answer the women, stare for stare.
'T is an even fight, and I 'll carry it through, —
Pit them against me, great and small:
I grant no quarter, nor would I sue
For grace to the softest of them all.

I cannot remember half the men
Whose sin has tangled them in my toils,—
All are alike before me then,
Part of my easily conquered spoils:
Tall or short, and dark or fair,
Rich or famous, haughty or fond,
There are few, I find, who will not forswear
The lover's oath and the wedding bond.

Fools! what is it that drives them on
With their perjured lips on poison fed;
Vain of themselves, and cruel as stone,
How should they be so cheaply led?

Surely they know me as I am, —
  Only a cuckoo, at the best,
Watching, careless of hate and shame,
  To crouch myself in another's nest.

But the women, — how they flutter and flout,
  The stupid, terribly virtuous wives,
If I but chance to move about
  Or enter within their bustling hives!
Buz! buz! in the scandalous gatherings,
  When a strange queen lights amid their throng,
And their tongues have a thousand angry stings
  To send her travelling, right or wrong.

Well, the earth is wide and open to all,
  And money and men are everywhere,
And, as I roam, 't will ill befall
  If I do not gain my lawful share:
One drops off, but another will come
  With as light a head and heavy a purse;
So long as I have the world for a home,
  I 'll take my fortune, better or worse!

SPOKEN AT SEA

THE LOG-BOOK OF THE STEAMSHIP VIRGINIA

Twelve hundred miles and more
From the stormy English shore,
  All aright, the seventh night,
On her course our vessel bore.
Her lantern shone ahead,
And the green lamp and the red
  To starboard and to larboard
    Shot their light.

Close on the midnight call
What a mist began to fall,

And to hide the ocean wide,
And to wrap us in a pall!
Beneath its folds we past:
Hidden were shroud and mast,
And faces, in near places
Side by side.

Sudden there also fell
A summons like a knell:
Every ear the words could hear,—
Whence spoken, who could tell?
"What ship is this? where bound?"
Gods, what a dismal sound!
A stranger, and in danger,
Sailing near.

"The Virginia, on her route
From the Mersey, seven days out;
Fore and aft, our trusty craft
Carries a thousand souls, about."
"All these souls may travel still,
Westward bound, if so they will;
Bodies rather, I would gather!"
Loud he laughed.

"Who is 't that hails so rude,
And for what this idle mood?
Words like these, on midnight seas,
Bode no friend nor fortune good!"
"Care not to know my name,
But whence I lastly came,
At leisure, for my pleasure,
Ask the breeze.

"To the people of your port
Bear a message of this sort:
Say, I haste unto the West,
A sharer of their sport.

THE DUKE'S EXEQUY

Let them sweep the houses clean:
Their fathers did, I ween,
When hearing of my nearing
As a guest!

"As by Halifax ye sail
And the steamship England hail,
Of me, then, bespeak her men;
She took my latest mail,—
'T was somewhere near this spot:
Doubtless they 've not forgot.
Remind them (if you find them!)
Once again.

"Yet that you all may know
Who is 't that hailed you so,
(Slow he saith, and under breath,)
I leave my sign below!"
Then from our crowded hold
A dreadful cry uprolled,
Unbroken, and the token,—
It was Death.

THE DUKE'S EXEQUY

ARRAS, A. D. 1404

CLOTHED in sable, crowned with gold,
All his wars and councils ended,
Philip lay, surnamed The Bold:
Passing-bell his quittance tolled,
And the chant of priests ascended.

Mailèd-knights and archers stand,
Thronging in the church of Arras;
Nevermore at his command

Shall they scour the Netherland,
Nevermore the outlaws harass;

Naught is left of his array
Save a barren territory;
Forty years of generous sway
Sped his princely hoards away,
Bartered all his gold for glory.

Forth steps Flemish Margaret then,
Striding toward the silent ashes;
And the eyes of armèd men
Fill with startled wonder, when
On the bier her girdle clashes!

Swift she drew it from her waist,
And the purse and keys it carried
On the ducal coffin placed;
Then with proud demeanor faced
Sword and shield of him she married.

"No encumbrance of the dead
Must the living clog forever;
From thy debts and dues," she said,
"From the liens of thy bed,
We this day our line dissever.

"From thy hand we gain release,
Know all present by this token!
Let the dead repose in peace,
Let the claims upon us cease
When the ties that bound are broken.

"Philip, we have loved thee long,
But, in years of future splendor,
Burgundy shall count among
Bravest deeds of tale and song
This, our widowhood's surrender."

Back the stately Duchess turned,
While the priests and friars chanted,
And the swinging incense burned:
Thus by feudal right was earned
Greatness for a race undaunted.

CUBA

Is it naught? Is it naught
That the South-wind brings her wail to our shore,
That the spoilers compass our desolate sister?
Is it naught? Must we say to her, "Strive no more."
With the lips wherewith we loved her and kissed her?
With the mocking lips wherewith we said,
"Thou art the dearest and fairest to us
Of all the daughters the sea hath bred,
Of all green-girdled isles that woo us!"
Is it naught?

Must ye wait? Must ye wait,
Till they ravage her gardens of orange and palm,
Till her heart is dust, till her strength is water?
Must ye see them trample her, and be calm,
As priests when a virgin is led to slaughter?
Shall they smite the marvel of all lands,—
The nation's longing, the Earth's completeness,—
On her red mouth dropping myrrh, her hands
Filled with fruitage and spice and sweetness?
Must ye wait?

In the day, in the night,
In the burning day, in the dolorous night,
Her sun-browned cheeks are stained with weeping.
Her watch-fires beacon the misty height:—
Why are her friends and lovers sleeping?

"Ye, at whose ear the flatterer bends,
Who were my kindred before all others,—
Hath he set your hearts afar, my friends?
Hath he made ye alien, my brothers,
Day and night?"

Hear ye not? Hear ye not
From the hollow sea the sound of her voice;
The passionate, far-off tone, which sayeth:
"Alas, my brothers! alas, what choice,—
The lust that shameth, the sword that slayeth?
They bind me! they rend my delicate locks;
They shred the beautiful robes I won me!
My round limbs bleed on the mountain rocks:
Save me, ere they have quite undone me!"
Hear ye not?

Speak at last! Speak at last!
In the might of your strength, in the strength of your right,
Speak out at last to the treacherous spoiler!
Say: "Will ye harry her in our sight?
Ye shall not trample her down, nor soil her!
Loose her bonds! let her rise in her loveliness,—
Our virginal sister; or, if ye shame her,
Dark Amnon shall rue for her sore distress,
And her sure revenge shall be that of Tamar!"
Speak at last!

1870.

THE COMEDIAN'S LAST NIGHT

Not yet! No, no,—you would not quote
That meanest of the critic's gags?
'T was surely not of me they wrote
Those words, *too late the veteran lags:*

'T is not so very late with me;
I 'm not so old as that, you know,
Though work and trouble — as you see —
(Not years) have brought me somewhat low.
I failed, you say? No, no, not yet!
Or, if I did, — with such a past,
Where is the man would have me quit
Without one triumph at the last?

But one night more, — a little thing
To you, — I swear 't is all I ask!
Once more to make the wide house ring, —
To tread the boards, to wear the mask,
To move the coldest as of yore,
To make them laugh, to make them cry,
To be — to be myself once more,
And then, if must be, let me die!
The prompter's bell! I 'm here, you see:
By Heaven, friends, you 'll break my heart!
Nat Gosling's called: let be, let be, —
None but myself shall act the part!

Yes, thank you, boy, I 'll take your chair
One moment, while I catch my breath.
D' ye hear the noise they 're making there?
'T would warm a player's heart in death.
How say you now? Whate'er they write,
We 've put that bitter gibe to shame;
I knew, I knew there burned to-night
Within my soul the olden flame!
Stand off a bit: that final round, —
I 'd hear it ere it dies away
The last, last time! — there 's no more sound:
So end the player and the play.

The house is cleared. My senses swim;
I shall be better, though, anon, —

One stumbles when the lights are dim, —
'T is growing late : we must be gone.
Well, braver luck than mine, old friends !
A little work and fame are ours
While Heaven health and fortune lends,
And then — the coffin and the flowers !
These scattered garments ? let them lie :
Some fresher actor (I 'm not vain)
Will dress anew the part ; — but I —
I shall not put them on again.

November 17, 1875.

LE JOUR DU ROSSIGNOL

'T WAS the season of feasts, when the blithe birds had met
In their easternmost arbor, an innocent throng,
And they made the glad birthday of each gladder yet,
With the daintiest cheer and the rarest of song.

What brave tirra-lirras ! But clear amid all,
At each festival held in the favorite haunt,
The nightingale's music would quaver and fall,
And surest and sweetest of all was his chant.

At last came the nightingale's fête, and they sought
To make it the blithefullest tryst of the year,
Since this was the songster that oftenest caught
The moment's quick rapture, the joy that is near.

But, alas ! half in vain the fine chorus they made;
Fresh-plumed and all fluttering, and uttering their best,
For silent among them, so etiquette bade,
To the notes of his praisers sat listening the guest.

Quel dommage ! Must a failure, like theirs, be our feast ?
Must our chorister's voice at his own fête be still ?

While he thinks: "You are kind. May your tribe be increased;
But at this I can give you *such* odds if I will!"

What avail, fellow-minstrels, our crotchets and staves,
Though your tribute, like mine, rises straight from the heart,
Unless while the bough on his laurel-bush waves,
To his own sängerfest the one guest lends his art?

Whose swift wit like his, with which none dares to vie,
Whose carol so instant, so joyous and true?
Sound it cheerly, dear HOLMES, for the sun is still high,
And we 're glad, as he halts, to be out-sung by you.

CRABBED AGE AND YOUTH

OUT, out, Old Age! aroint ye!
I fain would disappoint ye,
Nor wrinkled grow and learned
Before I am inurned.
Ruthless the Hours and hoary,
That scatter ills before ye!
Thy touch is pestilential,
Thy lays are penitential;
With stealthy steps thou stealest
And life's hot tide congealest;
Before thee vainly flying
We are already dying.
Why must the blood grow colder,
And men and maidens older?
Bring not thy maledictions,
Thy grewsome, grim afflictions, —
Thy bodings bring not hither
To make us blight and wither.
When this thy frost hath bound us,
All fairer things around us

Seem Youth's divine extortion
In which we have no portion.
"Fie, Senex!" saith a lass now,
"What need ye of a glass now?
Though flowers of May be springing
And I my songs are singing,
Thy blood no wit the faster
Doth flow, my ancient Master!"
Age is by Youth delighted,
Youth is by Age affrighted;
Blithe sunny May and joysome
Still finds December noisome.
Alack! a guest unbidden,
Howe'er our feast be hidden,
Doth enter with the feaster
And make a Lent of Easter!
I would thou wert not able
To seat thee at our table;
I would that altogether
From this thy wintry weather,
Since Youth and Love must leave us,
Death might at once retrieve us.
Old wizard, ill betide ye!
I cannot yet abide ye!

Ah, Youth, sweet Youth, I love ye!
There 's naught on Earth above ye!
Thou purling bird uncaged
That never wilt grow aged,
To whom each day is giving
Increase of joyous living!
Soft words to thee are spoken,
For thee strong vows are broken,
All loves and lovers cluster,
To bask them in thy lustre.
Ah, girlhood, pout and dimple,
Half hid beneath the wimple!

Ah, boyhood, blithe and cruel,
Whose heat doth need no fuel,
No help of wine and spices
And frigid Eld's devices!
All pleasant things ye find you,
And to your sweet selves bind you.
For you alone the motion
Of brave ships on the ocean;
All stars for you are shining,
All wreaths your foreheads twining;
All joys, your joys decreeing,
Are portions of your being, —
All fairest sights your features,
Ye selfish, soulful creatures!
Sing me no more distiches
Of glory, wisdom, riches;
Tell me no beldame's story
Of wisdom, wealth, and glory!
To Youth these are a wonder, —
To Age a corpse-light under
The tomb with rusted portal
Of that which seemed immortal.
I, too, in Youth's dear fetter,
Will love my foeman better, —
Ay, though his ill I study, —
So he be young and ruddy,
Than comrade true and golden,
So he be waxen olden.
Ah, winsome Youth, stay by us!
I prithee, do not fly us!
Ah, Youth, sweet Youth, I love ye!
There 's naught on Earth above ye!

HYPATIA

'T is fifteen hundred years, you say,
Since that fair teacher died

In learnèd Alexandria
By the stone altar's side : —
The wild monks slew her, as she lay
At the feet of the Crucified.

Yet in a prairie-town, one night,
I found her lecture-hall,
Where bench and dais stood aright,
And statues graced the wall,
And pendent brazen lamps the light
Of classic days let fall.

A throng that watched the speaker's face,
And on her accents hung,
Was gathered there : the strength, the grace
Of lands where life is young
Ceased not, I saw, with that blithe race
From old Pelasgia sprung.

No civic crown the sibyl wore,
Nor academic tire,
But shining skirts, that trailed the floor
And made her stature higher ;
A written scroll the lecturn bore,
And flowers bloomed anigh her.

The wealth her honeyed speech had won
Adorned her in our sight ;
The silkworm for her sake had spun
His cincture, day and night ;
With broider-work and Honiton
Her open sleeves were bright.

But still Hypatia's self I knew,
And saw, with dreamy wonder,
The form of her whom Cyril slew
(See Kingsley's novel, yonder)

HYPATIA

Some fifteen centuries since, 't is true,
And half a world asunder.

Her hair was coifed Athenian-wise,
With one loose tress down-flowing;
Apollo's rapture lit her eyes,
His utterance bestowing, —
A silver flute's clear harmonies
On which a god was blowing.

Yet not of Plato's sounding spheres,
And universal Pan,
She spoke; but searched historic years,
The sisterhood to scan
Of women, — girt with ills and fears, —
Slaves to the tyrant, Man.

Their crosiered banner she unfurled,
And onward pushed her quest
Through golden ages of a world
By their deliverance blest: —
At all who stay their hands she hurled
Defiance from her breast.

I saw her burning words infuse
A warmth through many a heart,
As still, in bright successive views,
She drew her sex's part;
Discoursing, like the Lesbian Muse,
Of work, and song, and art.

Why vaunt, I thought, the past, or say
The later is the less?
Our Sappho sang but yesterday,
Of whom two climes confess
Heaven's flame within her wore away
Her earthly loveliness.

So let thy wild heart ripple on,
Brave girl, through vale and city!
Spare, of its listless moments, one
To this, thy poet's ditty;
Nor long forbear, when all is done,
Thine own sweet self to pity.

The priestess of the Sestian tower,
Whose knight the sea swam over,
Among her votaries' gifts no flower
Of heart's-ease could discover:
She died, but in no evil hour,
Who, dying, clasped her lover.

The rose-tree has its perfect life
When the full rose is blown;
Some height of womanhood the wife
Beyond thy dream has known;
Set not thy head and heart at strife
To keep thee from thine own.

Hypatia! thine essence rare
The rarer joy should merit:
Possess thee of that common share
Which lesser souls inherit:
All gods to thee their garlands bear,—
Take one from Love and wear it!

SISTER BEATRICE

A Legend from the "Sermones Discipuli" of Jean Herolt, the Dominican, A. D. 1518

A cloister tale,—a strange and ancient thing
Long since on vellum writ in gules and or:
And why should Chance to me this trover bring
From the grim dust-heap of forgotten lore,

And not to that gray bard still measuring
His laurelled years by music's golden score,
Nor to some comrade who like him has caught
The charm of lands by me too long unsought?

Why not to one who, with a steadfast eye,
Ingathering her shadow and her sheen,
Saw Venice as she is, and, standing nigh,
Drew from the life that old, dismantled queen?
Or to the poet through whom I well descry
Castile, and the Campeador's demesne?
Or to that eager one whose quest has found
Each place of long renown, the world around;

Whose foot has rested firm on either hill, —
The sea-girt height where glows the midnight sun,
And wild Parnassus; whose melodious skill
Has left no song untried, no wreath unwon?
Why not to these? Yet, since by Fortune's will
This quaint task given me I must not shun,
My verse shall render, fitly as it may,
An old church legend, meet for Christmas Day.

Once on a time (so read the monkish pages),
Within a convent — that doth still abide
Even as it stood in those devouter ages,
Near a fair city, by the highway's side —
There dwelt a sisterhood of them whose wages
Are stored in heaven: each a virgin bride
Of Christ, and bounden meekly to endure
In faith, and works, and chastity most pure.

A convent, and within a summer-land,
Like that of Browning and Boccaccio!
Years since, my greener fancy would have planned
Its station thus: it should have had, I trow,

A square and flattened bell-tower, that might stand
  Above deep-windowed buildings long and low,
Closed all securely by a vine-clung wall,
And shadowed on one side by cypress tall.

Within the gate, a garden set with care :
  Box-bordered plots, where peach and almond trees
Rained blossoms on the maidens walking there,
  Or rustled softly in the summer breeze ;
Here were sweet jessamine and jonquil rare,
  And arbors meet for pious talk at ease ;
There must have been a dove-cote too, I know,
Where white-winged birds like spirits come and go.

Outside, the thrush and lark their music made
  Beyond the olive-grove at dewy morn ;
By noon, cicalas, shrilling in the shade
  Of oak and ilex, woke the peasant's horn;
And, at the time when into darkness fade
  The vineyards, from their purple depths were borne
The nightingale's responses to the prayer
Of those sweet saints at vespers, meek and fair.

Such is the place that, with the hand and eye
  Which are the joy of youth, I should have painted.
Say not, who look thereon, that 't is awry —
  Like nothing real, by rhymesters' use attainted.
Ah well! then put the faulty picture by,
  And help me draw an abbess long since sainted.
Think of your love, each one, and thereby guess
The fashion of this lady's beauteousness.

For in this convent Sister Beatrice,
  Of all her nuns the fairest and most young,
Became, through grace and special holiness,
  Their sacred head, and moved, her brood among,

Dévote d'âme et fervente au service ;
And thrice each day, their hymns and Aves sung,
At Mary's altar would before them kneel,
Keeping her vows with chaste and pious zeal.

Now in the Holy Church there was a clerk,
A godly-seeming man (as such there be
Whose selfish hearts with craft and guile are dark),
Young, gentle-phrased, of handsome mien and free.
His passion chose this maiden for its mark,
Begrudging heaven her white chastity,
And with most sacrilegious art the while
He sought her trustful nature to beguile.

Oft as they met, with subtle hardihood
He still more archly played the traitor's part,
And strove to wake that murmur in her blood
That times the pulses of a woman's heart;
And in her innocence she long withstood
The secret tempter, but at last his art
Changed all her tranquil thoughts to love's desire,
Her vestal flame to earth's unhallowed fire.

So the fair governess, o'ermastered, gave
Herself to the destroyer, yet as one
That slays, in pity, her sweet self, to save
Another from some wretched deed undone;
But when she found her heart was folly's slave,
She sought the altar which her steps must shun
Thenceforth, and yielded up her sacred trust,
Ere tasting that false fruit which turns to dust.

One eve the nuns beheld her entering
Alone, as if for prayer beneath the rood,
Their chapel-shrine, wherein the offering
And masterpiece of some great painter stood, —

The Virgin Mother, without plume or wing
  Ascending, poised in rapt beatitude,
With hands crosswise, and intercession mild
For all who crave her mercy undefiled.

There Beatrice — poor, guilty, desperate maid —
  Took from her belt the convent's blessed keys,
And with them on the altar humbly laid
  Her missal, uttering such words as these
(Her eyes cast down, and all her soul afraid):
  "O dearest mistress, hear me on my knees
Confess to thee, in helplessness and shame,
I am no longer fit to speak thy name.

"Take back the keys wherewith in constancy
  Thy house and altar I have guarded well!
No more may Beatrice thy servant be,
  For earthly love her steps must needs compel.
Forget me in this sore infirmity
  When my successor here her beads shall tell."
This said, the girl withdrew her as she might,
And with her lover fled that selfsame night;

Fled out, and into the relentless world
  Where Love abides, but Love that breedeth Sorrow,
Where Purity still weeps with pinions furled,
  And Passion lies in wait her all to borrow.
From such a height to such abasement whirled
  She fled that night, and many a day and morrow
Abode indeed with him for whose embrace
She bartered heaven and her hope of grace.

O fickle will and pitiless desire,
  Twin wolves, that raven in a lustful heart
And spare not innocence, nor yield, nor tire,
  But youth from joy and life from goodness part;

That drag an unstained victim to the mire,
  Then cast it soiled and hopeless on the mart!
Even so the clerk, once having dulled his longing,
A worse thing did than that first bitter wronging.

The base hind left her, ruined and alone,
  Unknowing by what craft to gain her bread
In the hard world that gives to Want a stone.
  What marvel that she drifted whither led
The current, that with none to heed her moan
  She reached the shore where life on husks is fed,
Sank down, and, in the strangeness of her fall,
Among her fellows was the worst of all!

Thus stranded, her fair body, consecrate
  To holiness, was smutched by spoilers rude.
And entered all the seven fiends where late
  Abode a seeming angel, pure and good.
What paths she followed in such woeful state,
  By want, remorse, and the world's hate pursued,
Were known alone to them whose spacious ken
O'erlooks not even the poor Magdalen.

After black years their dismal change had wrought
  Upon her beauty, and there was no stay
By which to hold, some chance or yearning brought
  Her vagrant feet along the convent-way;
And half as in a dream there came a thought
  (For years she had not dared to think or pray)
That moved her there to bow her in the dust
And bear no more, but perish as she must.

Crouched by the gate she waited, it is told,
  Brooding the past and all of life forlorn,
Nor dared to lift her pallid face and old
  Against the passer's pity or his scorn;

And there perhance had ere another morn
Died of her shame and sorrows manifold,
But that a portress bade her pass within
For solace of her wretchedness or sin.

To whom the lost one, drinking now her fill
Of woe that wakened memories made more drear,
Said, "Was there not one Beatrice, until
Some time now gone, that was an abbess here?"
"That was?" the other said. "Is she not still
The convent's head, and still our mistress dear?
Look! even now she comes with open hand,
The purest, saintliest lady in the land!"

And Beatrice, uplifting then her eyes,
Saw her own self (in womanhood divine,
It seemed) draw nigh, with holy look and wise,
The aged portress leaving at a sign.
Even while she marvelled at that strange disguise,
There stood before her, radiant, benign,
The blessed Mother of Mercy, all aflame
With light, as if from Paradise she came!

From her most sacred lips, upon the ears
Of Beatrice, these words of wonder fell:
"Daughter, thy sins are pardoned; dry thy tears,
And in this house again my mercies tell,
For, in thy stead, myself these woeful years
Have governed here and borne thine office well.
Take back the keys: save thee and me alone
No one thy fall and penance yet hath known!"

Even then, as faded out that loveliness,
The abbess, looking down, herself descried
Clean-robed and spotless, such as all confess
To be a saint and fit for Heaven's bride.

So ends the legend, and ye well may guess
(Who, being untempted, walk in thoughtless pride)
God of his grace can make the sinful pure,
And while earth lasts shall mercy still endure.

ALL IN A LIFETIME

Thou shalt have sun and shower from heaven above,
Thou shalt have flower and thorn from earth below,
Thine shall be foe to hate and friend to love,
Pleasures that others gain, the ills they know, —
And all in a lifetime.

Hast thou a golden day, a starlit night,
Mirth, and music, and love without alloy?
Leave no drop undrunken of thy delight:
Sorrow and shadow follow on thy joy.
'T is all in a lifetime.

What if the battle end and thou hast lost?
Others have lost the battles thou hast won;
Haste thee, bind thy wounds, nor count the cost:
Over the field will rise to-morrow's sun.
'T is all in a lifetime.

Laugh at the braggart sneer, the open scorn, —
'Ware of the secret stab, the slanderous lie:
For seventy years of turmoil thou wast born,
Bitter and sweet are thine till these go by.
'T is all in a lifetime.

Reckon thy voyage well, and spread the sail, —
Wind and calm and current shall warp thy way;
Compass shall set thee false, and chart shall fail;
Ever the waves will use thee for their play.
'T is all in a lifetime.

Thousands of years agone were chance and change,
  Thousands of ages hence the same shall be;
Naught of thy joy and grief is new or strange:
  Gather apace the good that falls to thee!
    'T is all in a lifetime!

THE SKULL IN THE GOLD DRIFT

What ho! dumb jester, cease to grin and mask it!
  Grim courier, thou hast stayed upon the road!
Yield up the secret of this battered casket,
  This shard, where once a living soul abode!
What dost thou here? how long hast lain imbedded
  In crystal sands, the drift of Time's despair;
Thine earth to earth with aureate dower wedded,
  Thy parts all changed to something rich and rare?

Voiceless thou art, and yet a revelation
  Of that most ancient world beneath the new;
But who shall guess thy race, thy name and station,
  Æons and æons ere these bowlders grew?
What alchemy can make thy visage liker
  Its untransmuted shape, thy flesh restore,
Resolve to blood again thy golden ichor,
  Possess thee of the life thou hadst before?

Before! And when? What ages immemorial
  Have passed since daylight fell where thou dost sleep!
What molten strata, ay, and flotsam boreal,
  Have shielded well thy rest, and pressed thee deep!
Thou little wist what mighty floods descended,
  How sprawled the armored monsters in their camp,
Nor heardest, when the watery cyle ended,
  The mastodon and mammoth o'er thee tramp.

How seemed this globe of ours when thou didst scan it?
  When, in its lusty youth, there sprang to birth

All that has life, unnurtured, and the planet
  Was paradise, the true Saturnian Earth!
Far toward the poles was stretched the happy garden;
  Earth kept it fair by warmth from her own breast;
Toil had not come to dwarf her sons and harden;
  No crime (there was no want) perturbed their rest.

How lived thy kind? Was there no duty blended
  With all their toilless joy,—no grand desire?
Perchance as shepherds on the meads they tended
  Their flocks, and knew the pastoral pipe and lyre;
Until a hundred happy generations,
  Whose birth and death had neither pain nor fear,
At last, in riper ages, brought the nations
  To modes which we renew who greet thee here.

How stately then they built their royal cities,
  With what strong engines speeded to and fro;
What music thrilled their souls; what poets' ditties
  Made youth with love, and age with honor glow!
And had they then their Homer, Kepler, Bacon?
  Did some Columbus find an unknown clime?
Was there an archetypal Christ, forsaken
  Of those he died to save, in that far time?

When came the end? What terrible convulsion
  Heaved from within the Earth's distended shell?
What pent-up demons, by their fierce repulsion,
  Made of that sun-lit crust a sunless hell?
How, when the hour was ripe, those deathful forces
  In one resistless doom o'erwhelmed ye all;
Ingulfed the seas and dried the river courses,
  And made the forests and the cities fall!

Ah me! with what a sudden, dreadful thunder
  The whole round world was split from pole to pole!

Down sank the continents, the waters under,
And fire burst forth where now the oceans roll;
Of those wan flames the dismal exhalations
Stifled, anon, each living creature's breath,
Dear life was driven from its utmost stations,
And seethed beneath the smoking pall of death!

Then brawling leapt full height yon helmèd giants;
The proud Sierras on the skies laid hold;
Their watch and ward have bidden time defiance,
Guarding thy grave amid the sands of gold.
Thy kind was then no more! What untold ages,
Ere Man, renewed from earth by slow degrees,
Woke to the strife he now with Nature wages
O'er ruder lands and more tempestuous seas.

How poor the gold, that made thy burial splendid,
Beside one single annal of thy race,
One implement, one fragment that attended
Thy life — which now has left not even a trace!
From the soul's realm awhile recall thy spirit,
See how the land is spread, how flows the main,
The tribes that in thy stead the globe inherit,
Their grand unrest, their eager joy and pain.

Beneath our feet a thousand ages moulder,
Grayer our skies than thine, the winds more chill;
Thine the young world, and ours the hoarier, colder,
But Man's unfaltering heart is dauntless still.
And yet — and yet like thine his solemn story;
Grope where he will, transition lies before;
We, too, must pass! our wisdom, works, and glory
In turn shall yield, and change, and be no more.

WITH A SPRIG OF HEATHER

TO THE LADY WHO SENT ME A JAR OF HYMETTIAN HONEY

LADY, had the lot been mine
That befell the sage divine,
Near Hymettus to be bred,
And in sleep on honey fed,
I would send to you, be sure,
Rhythmic verses — tuneful, pure,
Such as flowed when Greece was young
And the Attic songs were sung;
I would take your little jar,
Filled with sweetness from afar, —
Brown as amber, bright as gold,
Breathing odors manifold, —
And would thank you, sip by sip,
With the classic honeyed lip.
But the gods did not befriend
Me in childhood's sleep, nor send,
One by one, their laden bees,
That I now might sing at ease
With the winsome voice and word
In this age too seldom heard.
(Had they the Atlantic crost,
Half their treasure had been lost!)
Changed the time and gone the art
Of the glad Athenian heart.
Take you, then, in turn, I pray,
For your gift, this little spray, —
Heather from a breezy hill
That of Burns doth whisper still.
On the soil where this was bred
The rapt ploughman laid his head,
Sang, and looking to the sky
Saw the Muses hovering nigh.

From the air and from the gorse
Scotland's sweetness took its source; —
Precious still your jar, you see,
Though its honey stays with me.

MUSIC AT HOME

I SAT beneath a fragrant tasselled tree,
Whose trunk encoiling vines had made to be
A glossy fount of leafage. Sweet the air,
Far-off the smoke-veiled city and its care,
Precious and near the book within my hand —
The deathless song of that immortal land
Wherefrom Keats took his young Endymion
And laurelled bards enow their wreaths have won; —
When from some topmost spray began to chant
And flute, and trill, a warbling visitant,
A catbird, riotous the world above,
Hasting to spend his heritage ere love
Should music change to madness in his throat,
Leaving him naught but one discordant note.
And as my home-bred chorister outvied
The nightingale, old England's lark beside,
I thought — What need to borrow? Lustier clime
Than ours Earth has not, — nor her scroll a time
Ampler of human glory and desire
To touch the plume, the brush, the lips, with fire;
No sunrise chant on ancient shore and sea,
Since sang the morning stars, more worth shall be
Than ours, once uttered from the very heart
Of the glad race that here shall act its part.
Blithe prodigal, the rhythm free and strong
Of thy brave voice forecasts our poet's song!

THE HAND OF LINCOLN

Look on this cast, and know the hand
That bore a nation in its hold:
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was, — how large of mould

The man who sped the woodman's team,
And deepest sunk the ploughman's share,
And pushed the laden raft astream,
Of fate before him unaware.

This was the hand that knew to swing
The axe — since thus would Freedom train
Her son — and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and toiled amain.

Firm hand, that loftier office took,
A conscious leader's will obeyed,
And, when men sought his word and look,
With steadfast might the gathering swayed.

No courtier's, toying with a sword,
Nor minstrel's, laid across a lute;
A chief's, uplifted to the Lord
When all the kings of earth were mute!

The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet, lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas — and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 't is furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This moulded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out, —

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand, appears:
A type that Nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!

1883.

"YE TOMB OF YE POET CHAUCER"

Abbot and monks of Westminster
Here placed his tomb, in all men's view.
"Our Chaucer dead?" — King Harry said, —
"A mass for him, and burial due!"
This very aisle his footsteps knew;
Here Gower's benediction fell, —
Brother thou were and minstral trewe,
Now slepe thou wel.

Yᴱ TOMB OF Yᴱ POET CHAUCER

There died with that old century's death,
I wot, five hundred years ago,
One whose blithe heart, whose morning art,
Made England's Castaly to flow.
He in whose song that fount we know,
With every tale the skylarks tell,
Had right, Saint Bennet's wall below
To slumber well.

Eftsoons his master piously
In Surrey hied him to his rest;
The Thames, between their closes green,
Parted these warblers breast from breast, —
The gravest from the joyfulest
Whose notes the matin chorus swell:
A league divided, east and west,
They slumber well.

Is there no care in holy ground
The world's deep undertone to hear?
Can this strong sleep our Chaucer keep
When May-time buds and blossoms peer?
Less strange that many a sceptred year,
While the twin houses towered and fell,
Alike through England's pride and fear,
He slumbered well.

The envious Roses woefully
By turns a bleeding kingdom sway;
Thrones topple down, — to robe and crown
Who comes at last must hew his way.
No sound of all that piteous fray,
Nor of its ceasing, breaks the spell;
Still on, to great Eliza's day,
He slumbers well.

Methinks, had Shakespeare lightly walked
  Anear him in the minster old,
He would have heard, — his sleep had stirred
  With dreams of wonders manifold;
  Even though no sad vibration told
His ear when sounded Mary's knell, —
  Though, when the mask on Charles laid hold,
    He slumbered well.

In climes beyond his calendar
  The latest century's splendors grow;
London is great, — the Abbey's state
  A young world's eager wanderers know;
  New songs, new minstrels, come and go;
Naught as of old outside his cell, —
  Just as of old, within it low,
    He slumbers well.

And now, when hawthorn is in flower,
  And throstles sing as once sang he,
In this last age, on pilgrimage
  Like mine from lands that distant be,
  Come youths and maidens, summer-free,
Where shades of bards and warriors dwell,
  And say, " The sire of minstrelsy
    Here slumbers well ";

And say, " While London's Abbey stands
  No less shall England's strength endure ! "
Ay, though its old wall crumbling fall,
  Shall last her song's sweet overture;
  Some purling stream shall flow, be sure,
From out the ivied heap, to tell
  That here the fount of English pure
    Long slumbered well.

1879.

THE CONSTANT HEART

Sadde songe is out of season
  When birdes and lovers mate,
When soule to soule must paye swete toll
  And fate be joyned with fate;
Sadde songe and wofull thought controle
  This constant heart of myne,
And make newe love a treason
  Unto my Valentine.

How shall my wan lippes utter
  Their summons to the dedde,—
Where nowe repeate the promise swete,
  So farre my love hath fledd?
My only love! What musicke fleet
  Shall crosse the walle that barres?
To earthe the burthen mutter,
  Or singe it to the starrs?

Perchance she dwelles a spirite
  In beautye undestroyed
Where brightest starrs are closely sett
  Farre out beyonde the voyd;
If Margaret be risen yet
  Her looke will hither turne,
I knowe that she will heare it,
  And all my trewe heart learne.

But if no resurrection
  Unseale her dwellinge lowe
If one so fayre must bide her there
  Until the trumpe shall blowe,
Nathlesse shall Love outvie Despaire,
  (Whilst constant heart is myne)

And, robbed of her perfection,
Be faithfull to her shrine.

At this blythe season bending
Ile whisper to the clodde,
To the chill grasse where shadowes passe
And leaflesse branches nodde;
There keepe my watche, and crye — Alas
That Love may not forget,
That Joye must have swifte ending
And Life be laggard yet!

1882.

THE WORLD WELL LOST

THAT year? Yes, doubtless I remember still, —
Though why take count of every wind that blows!
'T was plain, men said, that Fortune used me ill
That year, — the selfsame year I met with Rose.

Crops failed; wealth took a flight; house, treasure, land,
Slipped from my hold — thus plenty comes and goes.
One friend I had, but he too loosed his hand
(Or was it I?) the year I met with Rose.

There was a war, I think; some rumor, too,
Of famine, pestilence, fire, deluge, snows;
Things went awry. My rivals, straight in view,
Throve, spite of all; but I, — I met with Rose.

That year my white-faced Alma pined and died:
Some trouble vexed her quiet heart, — who knows?
Not I, who scarcely missed her from my side,
Or aught else gone, the year I met with Rose.

Was there no more? Yes, that year life began:
All life before a dream, false joys, light woes,—
All after-life compressed within the span
Of that one year,—the year I met with Rose!

1883.

HEBE

See, what a beauty! Half-shut eyes,—
Hide all buff, and without a break
To the tail's brown tuft that mostly lies,
So quiet one thinks her scarce awake;
But pass too near, one step too free,
You find her slumber a devil's truce:
Up comes that paw,—all plush, you see,—
Out four claws, fit for Satan's use.

'Ware! Just a sleeve's breadth closer then,
And your last appearance on any stage!
Loll, if you like, by Daniel's Den,
But clear and away from Hebe's cage:—
That's Hebe! listen to that purr,
Rumbling as from the ground below:
Strange, when the ring begins to stir,
The fleshings always vex her so.

You think 't were a rougher task by far
To tame her mate with the sooty mane?
A splendid bronze for a showman's car,
And listless enough for bit and rein.
But Hebe is—just like all her sex—
Not good, then bad,—be sure of that:
In either case 't would a sage perplex
To make them out, both woman and cat.

A curious record, Hebe's. Reared
In Italy; age,—that 's hard to fix;

Trained from a cub, until she feared
The lash, and learned her round of tricks;
Always a traveller, — one of two
A woman-tamer took in hand,
Whipped them, coaxed them, — and so they grew
To fawn or cower at her command.

None but Florina — that was her name
And this the story of Hebe here —
Entered their cage; the brutes were tame
As kittens, though, their mistress near.
A tall, proud wench as ever was seen,
Supple and handsome, full of grace:
The world would bow to a real queen
That had Florina's form and face.

Her lover — for one she had, of course —
Was Marco, acrobat, circus-star,
The lightest foot on a running horse,
The surest leap from a swinging bar;
And she, — so jealous he dared not touch
A woman's hand, and, truth to say,
He had no humor to tease her much
Till a girl in spangles crossed their way.

'T was at Marseilles, the final scene:
This pretty rider joined the ring,
Ma'am'selle Celeste or Victorine,
And captured him under Florina's wing.
They hid their meetings, but when, you see,
Doubt holds the candle, love will show,
And in love's division the one of three,
Whose share is lessened, needs must know.

One night, then, after the throng outpoured
From the show, and the lions my Lady's power

Had been made to feel, with lash that scored
And eye that cowed them, a snarling hour; —
(They were just in the mood for pleasantry
Of those holidays when saints were thrown
To beasts, and the Romans, entrance-free,
Clapped hands;) — that night, as she stood alone,

Florina, Queen of the Lions, called
Sir Marco toward her, while her hand
Still touched the spring of a door that walled
Her subjects safe within Lion-land.
He came there panting, hot from the ring,
So brave a figure that one might know
Among all his tribe he must be king, —
If in some wild tract you met him so.

"Do you love me still," she asked, "as when
You swore it first?" "Have never a doubt!"
"But I have a fancy — men are men,
And one whim drives another out," —
"What fancy? Is this all? Have done:
You tire me." "Look you, Marco! oh,
I should die if another woman won
Your love, — but would kill you first, you know!"

"Kill me? and how, — with a jealous tongue?"
"Thus!" quoth Florina, and slipped the bolt
Of the cage's door, and headlong flung
Sir Marco, ere he could breathe, the dolt!
Plump on the lion he bounced, and fell
Beyond, and Hebe leapt for him there, —
No need for their lady's voice to tell
The work in hand for that ready pair.

They say one would n't have cared to see
The group commingled, man and beast,

Or to hear the shrieks and roars, — all three
One red, the feasters and the feast!
Guns, pistols, blazed, till the lion sprawled,
Shot dead, but Hebe held to her prey
And drank his blood, while keepers bawled
And their hot irons made yon scars that day.

But the woman? True, I had forgot:
She never flinched at the havoc made,
Nor gave one cry, but there on the spot
Drove to the heart her poniard-blade,
Straight, like a man, and fell, nor stirred
Again; — so that fine pair were dead;
One lied, and the other kept her word, —
And death pays debts, when all is said.

So they hustled Hebe out of France,
To Spain, or may be to England first,
Then hitherward over seas, by chance,
She came as you see her, always athirst, —
As if, like the tigresses that slink
In the village canes of Hindostan,
Of one rare draught she loves to think,
And ever to get it must plan and plan.

1884.

SOUVENIR DE JEUNESSE

When Sibyl kept her tryst with me, the harvest moon was rounded
In evening hush through pathways lush with fern we reached the glade;
The rippling river soft and low with fairy plashes sounded,
The silver poplar rustled as we sat within its shade.

A VIGIL

"And why," she whispered, "evermore should lovers meet to sunder?
Where stars arise in other skies let other lips than mine
Their sorrows lisp, and other hearts at love's delaying wonder —
O stay!" — and soon her tearful eyes were each a pearly shrine.

I soothed her fears and stayed her tears, her hands in mine enfolding,
And then we cared no more for aught save this one hour we had;
Upwelled that dreamful selfish tide of young Love's rapture, holding
The fair round world itself in pledge to make us still more glad.

For us the night was musical, for us the meadows shining;
The summer air was odorous that we might breathe and love;
Sweet Nature throbbed for us alone — her mother-soul divining
No fonder pair that fleeting hour her zephyrs sighed above.

Amid the nodding rushes the heron drank his tipple,
The night-hawk's cry and whir anigh a deeper stillness made,
A thousand little starlights danced upon the river's ripple,
And the silver poplar rustled as we kissed within its shade.

1884.

A VIGIL

I WALK the lane's dim hollow, —
Past is the twilight hour,

But stealthy shadows follow
And Night withholds her power,
For somewhere in the eastern sky
The shrouded moon is high.

Dews from the wild rose drip unheard, —
Their unforgotten scent
With that of woods and grasses blent;
No muffled flight of bird,
No whispering voice, my footfall stops;
No breeze amid the poplar-tops
The smallest leaf has stirred.

Yet round me, here and there,
A little fluttering wind
Plays now, — these senses have divined
A breath across my hair, —
A touch, — that on my forehead lies,
And presses long
These lips so mute of song,
And now, with kisses cool, my half-shut eyes.

This night? O what is here!
What viewless aura clings
So fitfully, so near,
On this returning eventide
When Memory will not be denied
Unfettered wings?

My arms reach out, — in vain, —
They fold the air:
And yet — that wandering breath again!
Too vague to make her phantom plain,
Too tender for despair.

1884.

THE STAR BEARER

THERE were seven angels erst that spanned
Heaven's roadway out through space,
Lighting with stars, by God's command,
The fringe of that high place
Whence plumèd beings in their joy,
The servitors His thoughts employ,
Fly ceaselessly. No goodlier band
Looked upward to His face.

There, on bright hovering wings that tire
Never, they rested mute,
Nor of far journeys had desire,
Nor of the deathless fruit;
For in and through each angel soul
All waves of life and knowledge roll,
Even as to nadir streamed the fire
Of their torches resolute.

They lighted Michael's outpost through
Where fly the armored brood,
And the wintry Earth their omens knew
Of Spring's beatitude;
Rude folk, ere yet the promise came,
Gave to their orbs a heathen name,
Saying how steadfast in men's view
The watchful Pleiads stood.

All in the solstice of the year,
When the sun apace must turn,
The seven bright angels 'gan to hear
Heaven's twin gates outward yearn:
Forth with its light and minstrelsy
A lordly troop came speeding by,

And joyed to see each cresset sphere
So gloriously burn.

Staying his fearless passage then
The Captain of that host
Spake with strong voice: "We bear to men
God's gift the uttermost,
Whereof the oracle and sign
Sibyl and sages may divine:
A star shall blazon in their ken,
Borne with us from your post.

"This night the Heir of Heaven's throne
A new-born mortal lies!
Since Earth's first morning hath not shone
Such joy in seraph eyes."
He spake. The least in honor there
Answered with longing like a prayer, —
"My star, albeit thenceforth unknown,
Shall light for you Earth's skies."

Onward the blessed legion swept,
That angel at the head;
(Where seven of old their station kept
There are six that shine instead.)
Straight hitherward came troop and star;
Like some celestial bird afar
Into Earth's night the cohort leapt
With beauteous wings outspread.

Dazzling the East beneath it there,
The Star gave out its rays:
Right through the still Judean air
The shepherds see it blaze, —
They see the plume-borne heavenly throng,
And hear a burst of that high song

Of which in Paradise aware
Saints count their years but days.

For they sang such music as, I deem,
In God's chief court of joys,
Had stayed the flow of the crystal stream
And made souls in mid-flight poise;
They sang of Glory to Him most High,
Of Peace on Earth abidingly,
And of all delights the which, men dream,
Nor sin nor grief alloys.

Breathless the kneeling shepherds heard,
Charmed from their first rude fear,
Nor while that music dwelt had stirred
Were it a month or year:
And Mary Mother drank its flow,
Couched with her Babe divine, — and, lo!
Ere falls the last ecstatic word
Three Holy Kings draw near.

Whenas the star-led shining train
Wheeled from their task complete,
Skyward from over Bethlehem's plain
They sped with rapture fleet;
And the angel of that orient star,
Thenceforth where Heaven's lordliest are,
Stands with a harp, while Christ doth reign,
A seraph near His feet.

1887.

EVENTIDE

The sunset fires old Portsmouth spires,
Out creeps the ebbing tide;
Beyond the battery-point I see
A glimmering schooner glide;

White flares the turning Whale-back light,
The silent ground-swell rolls;
Low and afar shines one red star
Above the Isles of Shoals.

1888.

HELEN KELLER

Mute, sightless visitant,
From what uncharted world
Hast voyaged into Life's rude sea,
With guidance scant;
As if some bark mysteriously
Should hither glide, with spars aslant
And sails all furled?

In what perpetual dawn,
Child of the spotless brow,
Hast kept thy spirit far withdrawn —
Thy birthright undefiled?
What views to thy sealed eyes appear?
What voices mayst thou hear
Speak as we know not how?
Of grief and sin hast thou,
O radiant child,
Even thou, a share? Can mortal taint
Have power on thee unfearing
The woes our sight, our hearing,
Learn from Earth's crime and plaint?

Not as we see
Earth, sky, insensate forms, ourselves,
Thou seest, — but vision-free
Thy fancy soars and delves,
Albeit no sounds to us relate
The wondrous things
Thy brave imaginings
Within their starry night create.

Pity thy unconfined
Clear spirit, whose enfranchised eyes
Use not their grosser sense?
Ah, no! thy bright intelligence
Hath its own Paradise,
A realm wherein to hear and see
Things hidden from our kind.
Not thou, not thou — 't is we
Are deaf, are dumb, are blind!

1888.

PORTRAIT D'UNE DAME ESPAGNOLE

(FORTUNY)

THE hand that drew thee lies in Roman soil,
Whilst on the canvas thou hast deathless grown,
Endued by him who deemed it meaner toil
To give the world a portrait save thine own.

Yet had he found thy peer, and Rome forborne
Such envy of his conquest over Time,
Beauty had waked, and Art another morn
Had gained, and ceased to sorrow for her prime.

What spirit was it — where the masters are —
Brooding the gloom and glory that were Spain,
Through centuries waited in its orb afar
Until our age Fortuny's brush should gain?

What stroke but his who pictured in their state
Queen, beggar, noble, Philip's princely brood,
Could thus the boast of Seville recreate,
Even when one like thee before him stood?

Like thee, own child of Spain, whose beauteous pride,
Desire, disdain, all sins thy mien express,

Should need no absolution — hadst thou died
Unhouselled, in their imaged loveliness.

All this had Fate decreed, — the antique skill,
The halt, the poise, the long auspicious day, —
Yielding this once, thy triumph to fulfil,
Velasquez' sceptre to Fortuny's sway.

Shine from thy cloud of night, fair star, nor fear
Oblivion, though men thy dust inurn,
For who may bid thy counterpart appear
Until the hand that drew thee shall return!

1889.

HAREBELL

A REPARATION

"GRANT him," I said, "a well-earned name,
The stage's knight, the keen assayer
Of parts whence all save greatness came,
But — not a player.

"Strange, as of fate's perverseness, this
Proud, eager soul, this fine-strung creature
Should seem forever just to miss
That touch of nature;

"The instinct she so lightly gives
Some fellow at his rivals snarling,
Some churl who gains the boards, and lives
Transformed — her darling!"

"You think so?" he replied. "Well, I
Thought likewise, maugre Lanciotto,
And Yorick, though his Cassius nigh
Won Hamlet's motto.

"But would you learn, as I, his clew
To nature's heart, and judge him fairly —
Go see his rustic bard, go view
His Man o' Airlie.

"See that defenceless minstrel brought
From hope to wan despair, from laughter
To frenzy's moan: the image wrought
Will haunt you after.

"Then see him crowned at last! If such
A guerdon waits the stricken poet,
'T were well, you 'll own, to bear as much —
Even die, to know it."

"Bravo!" cried I, "I too, the thrill
Must feel which thus your blood can waken."
And once I saw upon the bill
That part retaken;

But leagues of travel stretched between
Me and that idyl played so rarely:
And then — his death! nor had I seen
"The Man o' Airlie."

My failure; not the actor's, loved
By all to art and nature loyal;
Not his, whom Harebell's passion proved
Of the blood royal.

1891.

PROEM TO A VICTORIAN ANTHOLOGY

England! since Shakespeare died no loftier day
For thee than lights herewith a century's goal,—
Nor statelier exit of heroic soul
Conjoined with soul heroic, — nor a lay
Excelling theirs who made renowned thy sway
Even as they heard the billows which outroll
Thine ancient sea, and left their joy and dole
In song, and on the strand their mantles gray.
Star-rayed with fame thine Abbey windows loom
Above his dust, whom the Venetian barge
Bore to the main; who passed the twofold marge
To slumber in thy keeping — yet make room
For the great Laurifer, whose chanting large
And sweet shall last until our tongue's far doom.

1895.

PROEM TO "POEMS NOW FIRST COLLECTED"

Thou, — whose endearing hand once laid in sooth
Upon thy follower, no want thenceforth,
Nor toil, nor joy and pain, nor waste of years
Filled with all cares that deaden and subdue,
Can make thee less to him — can make thee less
Than sovereign queen, his first liege, and his last
Remembered to the unconscious dying hour, —
Return and be thou kind, bright Spirit of song,
Thou whom I yet loved most, loved most of all
Even when I left thee — I, now so long strayed
From thy beholding! And renew, renew
Thy gift to me fain clinging to thy robe!
Still be thou kind, for still thou wast most dear.

1897.

FATHER JARDINE

TRINITY CHURCH, ST. LOUIS

AROUND his loins, when the last breath had gone
From the gaunt frame — and death's encroaching mist,
A veil betwixt earth left and heaven won,
Told naught of all it wist —

Close to the flesh, sore-lashed by waves of pain,
They found the iron girth that ate his side,
Its links worn bright : the cruel, secret chain,
They found it when he died.

Son of the Church, though worldlings spake her creed
And smiled askance, even in the altar fold,
This man, this piteous soul, believed indeed
With the stern faith of old.

Unquestioning aught, aye, in the eager West
Surcharged with life that mocks the vague unknown,
His ligature of anguish unconfest
He wore alone — alone.

Alone ? but trebly welded links of fate
More lives than one are bidden to endure,
Forged in a chain's indissoluble weight
Of agonies more sure.

His torture was self-torture ; to his soul
No jest of time irrevocably brought
A woe more grim than underneath the stole
His gnawing cincture wrought.

Belike my garments, — yes, or thine, — conceal
The sorer wound, the pitiabler throe,
Not even the traitor Death shall quite reveal
For his rough mutes to know.

What the heart hungered for and was denied,
Still foiled with guerdons for a world to see
And envy it, — this furrows deep and wide
Its grooves in thee — in me.

Borne, always borne — what martyrdoms assoil
The laden soul from hostile chance and blind?
Nor time can loose the adamantine coil,
Nor Azrael unbind.

Redemption for the priest! but naught their gain
Who forfeit still the one thing asked of Earth,
Knowing all penance light beside this pain —
All pleasure, nothing worth.

1894.

FIN DE SIÈCLE

Now making exit to the outer vast
Our century speeds, and shall retain no more
Its perihelion splendor, save to cast
A search-light on the chartless course before.

I hear the murmur of our kind, whose eyes
Follow the spread of that phantasmal ray;
Who see as infants see, nor can surmise
Aright of what is near — what far away.

I hear the jest, the threnody, the low
Recount of dreams which down the years have fled, —
Of fair romance now shattered with love's bow,
Of legend brought to test, and passion dead.

Dark Science broods in Fancy's hermitage,
The rainbow fades, — and hushed, they say, is Song
With those high bards who lingering charmed the age
Ere one by one they joined the statued throng.

I hear the dirge for beauty sped, and faith
  Astray in space and time's far archways lost,
Till Life itself becomes a tenuous wraith,
  A wandering shade whom wandering shades accost.

Their light sad plaint I hear who thus divine
  The future, counselling that all is done, —
Naught left for art's sweet touch — but to refine,
  For courage — but to face the setting sun.

I hear, yet have no will to falter so.
  We seek out matter's alchemy, and tame
Force to our needs, but what shall make us know
  Whether the twain are parted, or the same?

The same! then conscious substance, fetterless
  The more when most subdued to Will's control,
Free though in bonds, foredestined to progress, —
  Ever, and ever still — the soul, the soul:

The unvexed spirit, to whose sure intent
  All else is relative. Or large or small,
The Afrit, cloud or being, free or pent,
  Enshrouds, impenetrates, and masters all.

No grain of sand too narrow to enfold
  The spirit's incarnation; no vast land
And sea, but, readjusted to their mould,
  It deems Atlantis scarce a grain of sand.

Time's intervals are ages; planets sleep
  In death, or blaze in living light afar;
Thought answers thought; deep calleth unto deep
  Alike within the globule and the star.

Ay, even the rock-bound globe, which still doth feign
  Itself inanimate, itself shall seem
From yonder void a bead upon the train
  Of heaven's warder rayed with beam on beam.

Life, when the harper tunes his shrillest string,
  As to low thunder lends a finer ear
Unseen. Niagara's slow vibrating
  Is but the treble of the greater sphere,

Whose lightest orchestras such movements play
  As mock the forest's moan, the bass profound
Of surges that against deep barriers stay
  Their might, in throes which shake the ancient ground.

Will, consciousness, the tenant lord of all,
  Self-tenanted, is still the wrinkled wave
Which climbs a wave upon the clambering wall
  Beyond, or in the hollow seeks a grave.

We time the ray, we pulsate with the fling
  Of ether — feel the sure magnetic thrill
Make answer to each sombre vortex ring
  Whirled with the whirling sun that binds us still;

That binds us, bound itself from girth to pole
  By some unconquerable deathless force
Akin to this which thinks, acts, feels, — the soul
  Of man, forever eddying like its source.

Passion and jest, the laugh and wail of earth,
  High thought and speech, the rare considerings
Of beauty that to fairer art gives birth,
  The winnowing of poesy's swift wings, —

These — though the hoary century inurn
  Our great — no gathering mould of time shall clod:
They bide their hour, they pass but to return
  With men, as now, the progeny of God.

1892.

SHADOW-LAND

"DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW

WAKING, I have been nigh to Death, —
Have felt the chillness of his breath
Whiten my cheek and numb my heart,
And wondered why he stayed his dart, —
Yet quailed not, but could meet him so,
As any lesser friend or foe.

But sleeping, in the dreams of night,
His phantom stifles me with fright!
O God! what frozen horrors fall
Upon me with his visioned pall:
The movelessness, the unknown dread,
Fair life to pulseless silence wed!

And *is* the grave so darkly deep,
So hopeless, as it seems in sleep?
Can our sweet selves the coffin hold
So dumb within its crumbling mould?
And is the shroud so dank and drear
A garb, — the noisome worm *so* near?

Where then is Heaven's mercy fled, —
To quite forget the voiceless dead?

THE ASSAULT BY NIGHT

ALL night we hear the rattling flaw,
The casements shiver with each breath;
And still more near the foemen draw,
The pioneers of Death

Their grisly chieftain comes :
He steals upon us in the night ;
Call up the guards ! light every light !
Beat the alarum drums !

His tramp is at the outer door ;
He bears against the shuddering walls ;
Lo ! what a dismal frost and hoar
Upon the window falls !
Outbar him while ye may !
Feed, feed the watch-fires everywhere, —
Even yet their cheery warmth will scare
This thing of night away.

Ye cannot ! something chokes the grate
And clogs the air within its flues,
And runners from the entrance-gate
Come chill with evil news :
The bars are broken ope !
Ha ! he has scaled the inner wall !
But fight him still, from hall to hall ;
While life remains, there 's hope.

Too late ! the very frame is dust,
The locks and trammels fall apart ;
He reaches, scornful of their trust,
The portals of the heart.
Ay, take the citadel !
But where, grim Conqueror, is thy prey ?
In vain thou 'lt search each secret way,
Its flight is hidden well.

We yield thee, for thy paltry spoils,
This shell, this ruin thou hast made ;
Its tenant has escaped thy toils,
Though they were darkly laid.

Even now, immortal, pure,
It gains a house not made with hands,
A refuge in serener lands,
A heritage secure.

THE SAD BRIDAL

WHAT would you do, my dear one said,—
What would you do, if I were dead?
If Death should mumble, as he list,
These red lips which now you kist?
What would my love do, were I wed
To that ghastly groom instead;
If o'er me, in the chancel, Death
Should cast his amaranthine wreath,—
Before my eyes, with fingers pale,
Draw down the mouldy bridal veil?
—Ah no! no! it cannot be!
Death would spare their light, and flee,
And leave my love to Life and me!

THE DISCOVERER

I HAVE a little kinsman
Whose earthly summers are but three,
And yet a voyager is he
Greater than Drake or Frobisher,
Than all their peers together!
He is a brave discoverer,
And, far beyond the tether
Of them who seek the frozen Pole,
Has sailed where the noiseless surges roll.
Ay, he has travelled whither
A winged pilot steered his bark
Through the portals of the dark,

Past hoary Mimir's well and tree,
Across the unknown sea.

Suddenly, in his fair young hour,
Came one who bore a flower,
And laid it in his dimpled hand
With this command:
"Henceforth thou art a rover!
Thou must make a voyage far,
Sail beneath the evening star,
And a wondrous land discover."
— With his sweet smile innocent
Our little kinsman went.

Since that time no word
From the absent has been heard.
Who can tell
How he fares, or answer well
What the little one has found
Since he left us, outward bound?
Would that he might return!
Then should we learn
From the pricking of his chart
How the skyey roadways part.
Hush! does not the baby this way bring,
To lay beside this severed curl,
Some starry offering
Of chrysolite or pearl?

Ah, no! not so!
We may follow on his track,
But he comes not back.
And yet I dare aver
He is a brave discoverer
Of climes his elders do not know.
He has more learning than appears
On the scroll of twice three thousand years,

More than in the groves is taught,
Or from furthest Indies brought;
He knows, perchance, how spirits fare,—
What shapes the angels wear,
What is their guise and speech
In those lands beyond our reach,—
And his eyes behold
Things that shall never, never be to mortal hearers told.

MORS BENEFICA

Give me to die unwitting of the day,
And stricken in Life's brave heat, with senses clear:
Not swathed and couched until the lines appear
Of Death's wan mask upon this withering clay,
But as that old man eloquent made way
From Earth, a nation's conclave hushed anear;
Or as the chief whose fates, that he may hear
The victory, one glorious moment stay.
Or, if not thus, then with no cry in vain,
No ministrant beside to ward and weep,
Hand upon helm I would my quittance gain
In some wild turmoil of the waters deep,
And sink content into a dreamless sleep
(Spared grave and shroud) below the ancient main.

1893.

"THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY."

Could we but know
The land that ends our dark, uncertain travel,
Where lie those happier hills and meadows low,—
Ah, if beyond the spirit's inmost cavil,
Aught of that country could we surely know,
Who would not go?

Might we but hear
The hovering angels' high imagined chorus,
Or catch, betimes, with wakeful eyes and clear,
One radiant vista of the realm before us, —
With one rapt moment given to see and hear,
Ah, who would fear?

Were we quite sure
To find the peerless friend who left us lonely,
Or there, by some celestial stream as pure,
To gaze in eyes that here were lovelit only, —
This weary mortal coil, were we quite sure,
Who would endure?

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

DATE DUE

JUL. 12 1983		STORAGE	
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Stedman, Edmund C.
Poems.

PS
2910
1908

179945